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THE
THEOLOGICAL WORKS
OF THE
REV. DR. PROUDFIT.

A
SERIES
OF
DISCOURSES

ON THE
LEADING DOCTRINES AND DUTIES.

OF
CHRISTIANITY.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY ALEXANDER PROUDFIT, D. D.
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, SALEM, NEW-YORK.

VOL. IV.

SALEM :
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PREFACE

To the inhabitants of the Frontier Settlements, whose edification and salvation are most earnestly desired, Grace, Mercy and Peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

I HAVE endeavored upon different occasions, and by different methods, as the Lord afforded opportunity, to direct your attention to the ONE THING NEEDFUL; to convince you that *the redemption of the soul is precious, infinitely precious*; and that this redemption can be secured only by improving the sufferings and mediation of Jehovah the Redeemer. A desire to promote this important end constrained me at first to prepare, and now to circulate among you the following discourses. No novelty of doctrine is studied; those truths of the Holy Ghost are exhibited, which through his blessing have wrought mightily in all ages for the conversion, and sanctification, and salvation of souls. No elegance of manner is affected; that language is employed which, with a humble dependance on the Lord the Spirit, appeared most calculated to instruct, and impress, and persuade.—“And my speech, and my preaching was not with en-

ticing words of man's wisdom ; but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power : that your faith should not stand in" the wisdom of men ; but in the power of God.

The first discourse is intended to rouse the sinner from his security, and bring him to a consideration of his ways. The second is designed to preserve him from resting on false, unscriptural confidences ; on any other foundation than *Christ Jesus the Lord* —whom I have endeavored to exhibit in the third. The fourth is an attempt to illustrate the nature of that FAITH by which the sinner becomes interested in the Saviour, and " grows up to the measure of the stature of his fulness." The fifth contains a variety of arguments urging all to close with this divinely gracious Redeemer without delay ; and the sixth is addressed more immediately to the young, recommending early religion, early acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, and union to his glorious person as their happiness, and interest, and honor. These plain, scriptural truths I not only entreat you in the bowels of our Lord Jesus, but admonish you by the majesty of his final appearing, affectionately to receive and diligently improve. If these be neglected or forgotten, not only the love of the Father in giving his Son, not only the love of Jesus in coming and suffering, but the very anxiety of ministers in publishing, and the liberality of christian friends in diffusing

them must aggravate your condemnation and woe.

You will readily observe that a crucified Jesus is kept constantly in view throughout these discourses ; because, if we are saved, he must be “ the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending ” of our salvation. On *this rock*, Christ Jesus the Lord, in his atoning sacrifice, his everlasting righteousness, his covenant fulness—on this naked rock thy soul and mine must be founded, or there remains nothing but disappointment in life, and despair in death, and damnation through eternity. That prayer inspired by the living God, and uttered by his holy apostle must receive its fearful accomplishment, “ if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha, ” accursed from his presence and kingdom. The Lord the Spirit forbid that this doom should overtake a single reader of these pages ; but in the riches of his grace may “ he convince thee of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. ”

That Christ may be formed in thee “ the hope of glory, ” and that thou mayst be enabled to walk intimately with him as thy righteousness, and strength, and consolation, is, beloved reader, the prayer of *thy servant*, for *this Jesus’ sake*.

ALEX. PROUDFIT.

Salem, January 9, 1804.

SERMON I.



PROVERBS VI. 9.

*How long will thou sleep, O sluggard? when
will thou arise out of thy sleep?*

THE concern which a gracious God has manifested for the salvation of man, can be equalled only by our own carelessness and sloth.—In the counsels of eternity he devised a plan for our recovery from wrath; a plan to be executed in the birth, and sufferings, and death, and resurrection of his own Son. In the gospel of his grace he stands forth proclaiming himself reconciled to the world, and “reconciling the world to himself.” He there appears making not only a clear revelation, but an unconditional tender of eternal life to all without exception. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” The openly profligate, the most daringly impious are invited to return to the living God; and encouraged with the promise of the full, irreversible remission of their crimes. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;” he who has added injustice against men to his impiety against God, let him “return to the Lord and he will have mercy upon him;

and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon him." One moment a "long-suffering" God makes his appeal to our fears, by painting the miseries of hell, another moment he encourages our hopes by unveiling the joys and glories of heaven. "He will render to every man according to his works; to them who, by patient continuing in well doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth wickedly." *Now* he rebukes our madness in rushing deliberately upon destruction, *again* he gently admonishes our indifference and sloth. The language of our text may be considered at once an appeal to our fears and our hopes: it ministers severe reproof to our criminal unconcern, and furnishes the most encouraging intimation of mercy to those who diligently hear and obey. "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?"

The condition of the sinner, while he remains insensible of his danger, is frequently compared to that of a man under the influence of sleep. "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." The man who thoughtlessly wastes his time, and opportunities; who lives from

day to day “without repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,” or any deep concern about his future welfare, is evidently the “sluggard” whom the text addresses. It is no matter how diligent he may be in other pursuits, while he neglects the “one thing needful,” he is the most inexcusable idler; in the estimation of sound reasoning and inspired truth “he is laboring in vain, and spending his strength for naught and in vain. What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

May the Spirit of life from Christ Jesus the Lord breathe savingly on those “who are dead in trespasses and sins, while I attempt,

I. To shew in what respect security in sin may be compared to a “sleep,” and,

II. Evince the guilt and danger of indulging this security.

1. In the season of sleep the members of the body, in a great measure, cease to act and perform their respective offices. The eyes are closed against the light of the natural sun, and do not direct the man in discharging the duties of life: The ear is shut against the voice of instruction, and deaf to the alarms of approaching danger: The tongue is hushed in silence, and is neither the instrument of ascribing glory to God, nor imparting knowledge to man. Thus it is with those who are spiritually asleep;

who remain "dead in trespasses and sins." All the powers of the soul are suspended from spiritual action: The understanding has no suitable conceptions of the great God, of his character, or perfections, or law: it does not realize that justice which "will by no means clear the guilty:" nor that holiness "which cannot look upon iniquity" without abhorrence: It rather imagines the living God "to be altogether such an one as" ourselves, and approving our transgressions. The heart has no desires after Him, nor delight in Him who is perfection itself; who is the only source of blessedness and joy: It experiences no real pleasure in meditating on his promises or perfections, as they are clearly revealed in the works both of creation, and redemption. The memory, depraved and prostituted, is shamefully treacherous in relation to things spiritual and divine. While an unmeaning tale, an empty novel, or some ill natured report is faithfully retained, how speedily are forgotten truths which concern the glory of God, and our own everlasting welfare! "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet," saith the Lord, "my people have forgotten me days without number."

2. In natural sleep the time passes imperceptibly away. The person lost in agreeable slumbers makes no account of moments, or hours, or evenings. He neither reflects on the time that is gone, nor does he anticipate the morning which approaches. The

man thus profoundly asleep is a striking representation of the unconvinced, thoughtless sinner. "His accepted time, his day of salvation" passes insensibly away. Slumbering in the cradle of security, or dandled on the lap of sensual ease and enjoyment, he permits all the opportunities which are afforded for securing his salvation to pass unimproved. He scarcely thinks upon the days, and months, and years of his life which are already spent, or looks forward to death, and judgment, events which are certainly and rapidly approaching. Intoxicated with his present enjoyments, or future prospects he occasionally addresses himself in the flattering language of the rich man related in the parable, "soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." He thus insensibly advances from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, and from manhood to old age: When he has arrived at the period of forty he imagines himself as young, and is no less devoted to the pursuits, or pleasure of the present life, and regardless of his future destination, than at twenty: When he has attained to the age of fifty, or sixty, or seventy, he still amuses himself with the hope of multiplied years, and postpones the great work of salvation. He fondly flatters himself that "to morrow shall be as this day," and the next year as the present year, "or much more abundant."

3. The person asleep is unmoved by any

dangers which surround and threaten to injure him. The thief may enter his house, the murderer may approach, thirsting for his blood, the flames may be kindling over his head, or the lightnings blazing fearfully around ; but he is neither alarmed nor disturbed.—An awful image of the sinner who is stupidly inattentive to every warning given, or obstinately refuses to return and live. He disregards alike the terrors of divine wrath, and the entreaties of mercy.—Grace may invite, and expostulate in language the most soothing and insinuating ; justice may denounce her curses in a manner the most awful and alarming, without any lasting effect. If, like the Roman governor, he *trembles* for a moment ; if conscience, by her powerful voice, should succeed to startle him from his delusive repose, he endeavors to dismiss these unwelcome fears by postponing the work of repentance until a *more convenient time*, and afterwards becomes more secure, more hardened in transgression than ever.

4. Natural sleep, however profound or quietly enjoyed, must ere long be disturbed. It is no matter how securely the person rests ; it is no matter how agreeably his imagination entertains him with ten thousand pleasing dreams, the light of the morning at last approaches, and irresistably breaks the enchantment : Neither shall the security of the sinner last for ever, but dismay, and confusion and destruction must be his latter

end. "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. 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. 'These things,' saith God, at length provoked by their contempt of all his warnings and entreaties, "these things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." Men may slumber securely in their sins; they may neglect the various means which are appointed for their instruction and salvation; they may remain deaf to the voice of conscience, to the admonitions of the word and Spirit of the living God, and still amuse themselves with the prospect of happiness at last; but amidst all this delusion "their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." Each year, each month, each day, each hour hurries them on towards their dreadful retribution. They may shut their eyes against the light of the gospel, and close their ears against the calls of the ministry, but the light of the judgment day must be admitted, and "the trump of the archangel" must be heard and obeyed. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." How did the soul of the compassionate Saviour melt while he contemplated the guilt, and foresaw the doom of the unbelieving,

- incorrigible Jews? "He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes. As it was in the days of Noah, they did eat and drink, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all:" Such is the infatuation, and such, without preventing mercy, must be the doom of thousands under the dispensation of the gospel: They go to "their farms, or merchandise," or amusements; they yield to one temptation after another, and never embrace the overtures of divine love, until death overtakes them, until their judgment be executed, and their damnation unalterably fixed.

We proceed,

II. To shew the guilt and danger of indulging this security. "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?"

1. To indulge this security is inexcusable in the extreme, because we thus disobey the command of God, and rob him of that service and glory which he requires. Our own ease and enjoyment were not the principal

end for which we were created. The Lord God formed us, and preserves us for HIMSELF; "that we should be unto him for a name, and a praise, and a glory." Therefore to live in sloth and indifference; to waste our precious moments in serving and gratifying ourselves, is a species of robbery upon God our Creator, and defeats his purpose in giving us existence. Should not this consideration rouse us from our slumbers? Might it not constrain us to return without delay to that beneficent and glorious Being, from whom we have shamefully departed? "A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master; if I be a father, where is mine honor? if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts." Open thine eyes, beloved reader, and survey the other parts of the divine "dominion." Behold the angels "who excel in strength," how cheerfully they perform the pleasure of their Creator! They readily go abroad at his command to execute his purposes, either of love to his children, or wrath upon his enemies. See even the inanimate parts of his creation; how uniformly they perform his will? Do not the rain and the snow descend, and visit and refresh the earth at his command? Do not the waters of the deep ebb and flow at his command? Does not the sun at his command hasten from the east, and "run his race" to enlighten and cheer the nations of the earth? And shall man, the most favored inhabitant of this lower world; man, whom

his Creator "formed after his own image and likeness;" who was invested "with dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and every thing that moveth upon the earth;" and from whom a large revenue of glory was expected, shall he alone defeat the design of his existence? Must we be reproached as the only part of this lower world that disregards the call of our Creator and Lord? "How long therefore wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?"

2. To indulge this security is inexcusable in the extreme, because thereby our salvation is neglected, and our souls exposed to endless destruction. "Be not deceived, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." Brethren, there is much to be done; interests unutterably great are at stake, and therefore there is no room for carnal ease and indifference. "The whole world is become guilty before God: You are by nature the children of wrath even as others," and without reconciliation by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, you cannot "escape the damnation of hell. There are none righteous in themselves, no not one; and know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" You have by transgression forfeited your title to the inheritance of glory, and this title can be re-

gained only by improving the merits of the Divine Redeemer. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life, but he that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." Be not deceived, brethren, there is much to be done, and therefore no room for the indulgence of carnal ease, or indifference. "You are all as an unclean thing; aliens and enemies in your minds by wicked works: and without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" You can have no communion with him either in time or eternity. As you regard the peace of your souls in this world or the next, remember that declaration of our Lord, "Ye must be born again; verily, verily, I say unto you, that except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." In heaven all the society is holy, and all the exercises are holy, and none can be admitted "unless renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness." The seeds of grace, of faith, of repentance, of love, of hope must be sown in this world if we expect them to mature in the milder region of glory, and there to flourish in unwithering verdure. How necessary then to arise "from our sleep," and earnestly "strive that we may enter the kingdom?" While the work of our salvation is unspeakably great, many difficulties must be encountered in pursuing it. An evil world will attempt, sometimes to delude with its false smiles, again to dishearten by

its frowns : "The prince of darkness" will endeavor "as a roaring lion," to affright, and discourage, and drive to despair, or as a subtle serpent, to deceive and draw aside from the paths of righteousness. "We wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities, and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, and with spiritual wickedness in high places." He who turns his face towards Zīon, and expects his "soul for a prey," must conflict with opposition on the right hand and on the left. "The kingdom of heaven" is thus represented as "suffering violence, and the violent as taking it by force." When, therefore, we realize the infinitely great work to be done, and the many obstacles to be surmounted, how inexcusable do indolence and indifference appear? Are we not commanded "to pray without ceasing; to strive or wrestle," or agonize, "that we may enter in at the strait gate? To work out our salvation with fear and trembling? To give all diligence to make our calling and election sure? to gird up the loins of your mind as a man running a race," where the utmost exertion is required, will bind his garment around him; "to be sober, and hope unto the end for the grace which is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ?"

3. To indulge this security appears inexcusable in the extreme, when we reflect that our "day of salvation" is short, and must soon terminate for ever. In this world we

are merely travelling to another world; we are daily passing along to an unchanging state of existence, and it is only in the present life that preparation can be made for the next. If we neglect the Lord Jesus Christ, "there is no other sacrifice for sin;" if we misimprove the opportunities now enjoyed we need not expect any further dispensation of mercy. "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whether we are going." As the condition of every man is found at death, it will remain through eternity without the possibility of change. There is no remission of sin beyond the grave: The message of reconciliation is never heard in hell. Once damned the sinner is damned irrecoverably. How explicitly does the Holy Ghost mention "an accepted time, and a day of salvation?" How pointedly does he admonish us "to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near? To hear, and give ear, and give glory to the Lord our God, before he cause darkness, and before our feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while we look for light he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness? To seek righteousness, to seek peace before the day pass as the chaff; before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon us; before the day of the Lord's anger come upon us?" Are not these considerations sufficient to startle the sinner from his security, and excite him

to the most diligent "redemption of his time?" The man who would remain at ease when he knew that the house was in flames around him would be pronounced infatuated, and inexcusable: The man who would offer deliberately to compose himself for sleep on the verge of some fathomless gulph would be pronounced infatuated, and inexcusable: The criminal, lying under sentence of death, who had the assurance of pardon by asking it within a limited time, and yet wasted that time in indolence, or amusements would be pronounced infatuated, and inexcusable; but incomparably more infatuated, more inexcusable art thou, O man, who doest remain unconcerned about thine immortal destinies. Is the situation of the persons alluded to dreadful, thine is infinitely more so. It is not the displeasure of a mortal to which thou art exposed, but the wrath of almighty God. It is not merely the loss of thy natural life to which thou art liable, but the loss of both soul and body, their utter exclusion from God the source of glory and bliss. It is not the torture of a few moments which thou art in danger of suffering, but torments "for ever. They shall be punished with EVERLASTING destruction." The ETERNITY of its torments is the very essence of hell. It throws a deeper shade over the region of damnation, that *there* reigns the blackness of darknes FOR EVER. Amidst apprehensions thus awful "how long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when

wilt thou awake out of thy sleep?" I have not language to express my astonishment at the stupidity, the madness of men in sporting with their everlasting interests: I am often amazed at myself that I can reflect on the sinners danger, on the value of his soul, on the plenitude of that happiness which he despises, on the horrors of that hell to which he is hastening; that I can speak to him, or write to him with such indifference; I am often amazed that I can indulge a moment's ease, until I have aimed at plucking every thoughtless acquaintance, or neighbor "as a brand out of the burning." The Lord God of gods awake from his sloth every reader of these pages, lest "he sleep the sleep of death" eternal.

This doctrine may with propriety be applied both to sinners and saints. To the former permit me again to repeat the exhortation, "how long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard, when wilt thou awake out of thy sleep?" Is not the time past of your life sufficient to have wasted in trifling, unprofitable pursuits; "laboring in vain and spending your strength for naught, and in vain?" How many weeks, and months, and years of a short, uncertain life are already gone, and charged to your account in the records of heaven? Who knows but a righteous God, grieved and provoked with your impieties, may be now asking "why should they be stricken," or admonished, or entreated "any more?" He may perhaps be chal-

lenging the holy angels to attend, and witness the rectitude of his conduct in your immediate destruction, "what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done to it: Behold! these three," or six, or twelve, or twenty "years I have come seeking fruit on this, or" the other tree, "and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" I appeal to your own consciences whether this accusation might not in justice be brought against some of you. Ye who are parents and masters, must not some of you acknowledge that your families are no less strangers to prayer and praise, and the other duties of religion this year, than they were three, or six, or twelve years ago? I would carry my appeal to the hearts of the young, and ask, are not some of you as thoughtless about God your Creator, your kind Benefactor, your constant witness, your impartial Judge: about Jesus the friend of sinners, the Saviour of the world, the only "Mediator between God and man;" about the Holy Ghost without whose sanctifying, sealing influence you cannot see the kingdom of heaven; are you not as inattentive to prayer, to the word of God, to self-examination *now*, as you were months or years ago? Remember, ye who continue thus unfruitful under all the means of cultivation, that nothing but the sovereign mercy of God keeps you out of hell; nothing but sovereign mercy restrains him from completing your perdition by cutting

short your day, and causing your sun to go down in endless night. "Is it not therefore high time to awake out of sleep, and turn to the strong holds while you are prisoners of hope?" With many of you *possibly*; with some of you "probably the night is far spent, and the day is at hand, the day" of righteous retribution when the Lord God "will render to every man according to his works," and fix his state for eternity! "He who now waits to be gracious" may shortly summon you to his judgment-seat.—"He who is now exalted to shew mercy" may speedily execute the curse denounced, and "swear in his wrath that you shall not enter into his rest;" and yet wilt you dare to be asking "a little more sleep, a little more slumber?" Is it prudent, is it becoming the dignity of your nature; is it consistent with that friendship which you owe your better part, your immortal souls, still to prostitute your precious opportunities? Must all your concern be confined to the body which is mortal; which will soon be as though it had never been? Will you reserve no time, or devote no attention to the interests of that spirit which never, never dies; which must shortly be translated to an endless, unchanging state of existence? "The stork in the heavens knows his appointed time" and diligently improves it, and shall man who was framed "after the image of God," and elevated to a dignified rank among the creatures of his hand, shall man "suffer his

harvest to pass, his summer to end without any fore thought" about his future, everlasting concerns? Do you believe that death is approaching, and yet unanxious about that solemn, interesting event? Do you believe that there is "a judgment to come," and yet not concerned whether you shall be acquitted or condemned on that occasion? Surely, if you had the prospect of a trial at a human bar; a trial in which your character, or property, or life were depending, you would be often thinking of it; you would be anxiously preparing for it; you would employ the best counsel, and make every exertion to secure a favorable issue; and have you no solicitude about your appearance before the "judgment-seat" of Jehovah; is it uninteresting whether you shall then be doomed "to everlasting punishment," or awarded "to life eternal?"

Notwithstanding all that is past; although another year has been prostituted "in fulfilling the desires of the flesh," and following after the vanities of the world, a forbearing God continues to expostulate, "when wilt thou awake out of thy sleep?" In the immensity of his compassions he is still entreating, "how shall I give thee up Ephraim? Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die O house of Israel?" In God's name I ask you, WHY WILL YOU DIE? Is hell to be chosen in preference to heaven? Is the wrath of the uncreated, omnipotent Majesty more desirable than his loving kindness? Is the

society of evil angels and unbelieving, impenitent men "with the blackness of darkness for ever" more eligible than the fellowship of God, of Jesus, of elect, ransomed men, of elect, unsinning angels "with glory, and honor, and immortality?" WHY WILL YOU DIE? Has not the Lord God afforded every possible assurance "of good will to you" and his readiness to receive you? Is he not passing before you this moment through the mediation of his Son, and in the light of his gospel as "merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth?" As if he had said, "come and let us reason together, are you miserable, involved by transgression in ruin and woe? I am the Lord, the Lord God MERCIFUL: 'I will be MERCIFUL to your unrighteousness, your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more.' Are you undeserving? Have you by wilful, repeated acts of rebellion forfeited every claim to my friendship, and exposed yourselves to my wrath? I am the Lord, the Lord God GRACIOUS; I am ready upon your return not merely to pardon your offences but to honor you with the adoption of sons, and give you a title to all the joys and glories of my kingdom." A free, a full, an everlasting salvation is "now brought near" in the ministry of reconciliation. Commissioned by the King of kings I reach forth the sceptre of grace, and invite you to draw near and touch it, and be reconciled, and live for ever. I stand in this

pulpit and offer the righteousness of the infinite Jesus to every sinner in this assembly ; it is tendered to all without exception arising from character, or colour, or any other consideration.—The boundless blessings of the covenant ; all the treasures of grace and glory are offered to you “without money and without price.” They are free as the water which rises in the fountain, or as the dew which distils from the clouds, or as the light which beams from yonder sun.

“Dear God, the treasures of thy love
Are everlasting mines,
Deep as our helpless miseries are,
And boundless as our sins.

Rivers of love and mercy here
In a rich ocean join,
Salvation in abundance flows,
Like floods of milk and wine.

Ho, ye that pant for living streams,
And pine away and die ;
Here you may quench your ardent thirst,
With springs that never dry.”

And now, dearly beloved, are pardon, and grace and glory offered freely through the mediation of the Son of God, what hinders you to receive these unspeakable blessings ? Are you sensible of your miseries but unable to believe ? Have you no ability to approach the Lord Jesus Christ, and rest your souls on him for salvation ? He himself is the “Author and finisher of faith.” He who “brings near this robe of righteousness” in the everlasting gospel is gracious to strengthen the “withered hand,” and enable

you to receive it. That God, who in his mercy provided a Saviour for our world, has also indited the promise, "In his name shall the Gentiles trust: Men shall be blessed in him; in the Lord shall the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

Art thou unable to repent of thy past transgressions? Is thy heart obstinate, unrelenting, unmelted by all the dishonors done to a forbearing God, and all the sufferings undergone by a compassionate Saviour? "I will pour upon you," is his divinely gracious promise, a promise more certain than the revolution of the day and night, of summer and winter, "I will pour upon you the spirit of grace and supplication, and ye shall look upon me whom you have pierced, and mourn for him." That Jesus, "who gave his life" upon the cross "a ransom for many, is now exalted" upon the throne "to be a prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and the remission of sins." Commit thy soul with all its obduracy, and impenitence to his softening, sanctifying influences. He can make water to flow out of the rock, and the oil of grace out of the flinty rock of the human heart.

Hast thou no real love to God? Is thy spirit "carnal, earthly, sensual," prone to the low gratifications of the flesh without any ardent desires after Jesus, or delight in him as thy portion? The grace of *love* is absolutely promised. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart to love him. "A new

heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: I will take away the stony heart and I will give you an heart of flesh." Beloved reader, believe these promises to "be yea and amen in Jesus Christ, infallibly sure through his perfect sacrifice, and all prevailing intercession; receive them and Jesus with his salvation presented in them, as made to thyself in particular, as really as if thy name and surname were endorsed upon them. And "in whom believing," may you "be sealed with that holy spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory.

2. This passage may also be improved for the admonition and humiliation of the righteous. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of them shall much be required," and therefore indifference with respect to the glory of Jesus and the advancement of his kingdom on earth is more inexcusable in them than in the children of this world, because much more has been done for them. Has a sovereign God, passing by others, imparted to them the blessings of the covenant? has he made over to them the unsearchable riches of Christ, a complete pardon, the adoption of sons, and a title to heaven through his atonement, and righteousness they are peculiarly obligated to love, and serve, and adore him? They are constrained to live *to* him, and *for* him, not only from the consideration of his creating

goodness, but from the weightier argument of electing, and redeeming, and sanctifying love. "They are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that they should shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." But, alas! notwithstanding all the blessings which christians have already received, and the incomparably greater mercies which await them in reversion, are they not frequently cold and indifferent in the service of their redeemer and their generation? What a small proportion of their time is employed in holding fellowship with the living God by prayer, or in devout meditation on their exalted privileges and prospects, or in searching the scriptures, this record of their Father's love, this charter of their heavenly hope? How many precious moments are wasted, at their occasional interviews, in talking about their temporal concerns, and the common occurrences of life, but how rarely are they occupied in repeating to each other the promises of the gospel, in conversing about the instructions heard in the sanctuary, or relating their spiritual exercises, their fears, or joys, or hopes? "Even the wise virgins, the children of the bridegroom, slumber and sleep." Where is that fervor in prayer, "watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication?" that earnestness and affection "provoking one another to love and good works;" those ar-

dent longings for the communion of God in his ordinances, that disinterested zeal for his glory which adorn the christian character; and to which christians in former ages have attained? How must the holy angels, how must the redeemed in heaven be amazed, when they look down from their mansions, and witness our eagerness in grasping after the shadows of time, and our indifference about the great, the glorious realities of eternity? "How long wilt thou sleep?" O believer. "Are the consolations of God small," that thou canst be regardless about enjoying them? Is the advancement of his glory in thy generation a trifling object, that thou art so indifferent about promoting it? Is a joyful, triumphant meeting with thy Saviour in death uninteresting that thou art careless about preparation? Peradventure "at midnight the cry may be made, behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him," and yet will you suffer your loins to be loose, and your lamps glimmering ready to expire?

Surely then, "if there be any consolations in Christ; if any fellowship of the Spirit;" if any thing desirable in serving thy generation; if any thing important "in finishing thy course with joy:" if any thing interesting in obtaining "an entrance abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of thy" Saviour and Lord, "it is high time to awake out of sleep. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye your-

selves like unto men that wait for their Lord: that when he cometh and knocketh they may open to him immediately."

"And may the God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you:" and to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three equally gracious, divine, adorable persons in one Jehovah, be ascribed "dominion and praise, world without end." AMEN.

SERMON II.

LUKE, XIII, 24.

For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

THE salvation of the immortal spirit is a work at once immensely important and difficult. After the sinner has been convinced of his danger, awakened from his security, impressed in some degree with the rigors of divine justice, and the necessity of a reconciliation, he too frequently has recourse to a refuge of lies; he erects for himself some other "covert from the tempest" of wrath, than Jesus the rock of ages, the true "covert from the storm," devised by infinite wisdom, and there dreams of heaven until he awakes in hell. "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that lead-

eth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; but strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Of those who are baptized in the name of Jesus, who are instructed in the principles of his religion, and who afterwards put on the mask of a profession, many, we have reason to apprehend, will be finally disappointed: a small proportion of such, comparatively speaking, are now travelling "the narrow" way, or shall hereafter attain the prize of immortality. Our Master has forewarned us in language explicit and awful, "not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." In the oracles of the living God we read of one who "trembled" under the preaching of the word, but have no assurance that his convictions issued in saving conversion: we read of a second who, charmed with the excellence of divine truth, and the glories of the heavenly world, was "almost persuaded to be a christian," but there is no account that he *altogether* attained either the character, or the blessing which real religion secures. We read of another whom "Jesus loved;" who possess-

ed many moral excellencies, many amiable and useful qualifications, “but one thing was lacking, and that single defect, for ought that God has revealed, issued in his damnation. In the parable of the ten virgins, and in the chapter from which our text is selected, some are represented as approaching the Saviour, and expostulating, “Lord, Lord, open to us, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets:” to whom he will indignantly reply, “I know you not, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.”

It may not therefore be improper to inquire into the cause of this disappointment: to ascertain the reason why many who fondly dream of happiness now, shall probably come short hereafter?

This, with a humble reliance on the Spirit of truth for direction, is our present design. “Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

1. It may be remarked that the disappointment of any does not arise from want of mercy in the everlasting God. His grace is infinite as his nature; his mercy is an ocean without bottom, without bounds. He has positively pledged his word; he has confirmed it with the additional solemnity of an oath for the sinner’s encouragement, that he “has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked would turn from his ways and live:” He patiently waits, and affectionately expostulates, “Turn ye, turn ye, why

will ye die, O house of Israel." Could the eternal God have possibly exhibited a higher display of good will to men, of compassion towards their miseries, or concern for their happiness than by delivering up, freely delivering up the son of his love as a sacrifice and propitiation for our sins. This interposition in behalf of our world proclaims louder than language can express the tender mercies of Jehovah, and must for ever vindicate his justice in the punishment of the unbelieving and impenitent. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

2. Neither can the sinner's inability to enter be ascribed to any defect of merit in the Divine Redeemer. His blood, being the blood of God and his righteousness the righteousness of God, are infinitely meritorious for the redemption of sinners, even the chief. By the obedience of his life, and the sacrifice of his cross, the divinely glorious Immanuel has amply repaired the injuries of the broken law; has satisfied to the very uttermost the demands of vindictive justice, and has rendered the salvation of man eminently glorifying to each attribute of the Godhead.—Jehovah is *just*, immaculately "just while he justifies the ungodly, who submit to the righteousness of Jesus. He is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

He no longer charges transgression to their account, but with his own hand draws up and signs and seals their sentence of absolution. The all sufficiency of the Redeemer's satisfaction ; its infinite efficacy for securing glory to God, and peace and reconciliation to man is a theme which the great apostle frequently and rapturously contemplated ; but he appears to dwell upon it with peculiar elevation of heart, and loftiness of expression in the following passages—"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth ; who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound ; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

3. Neither can the failure of any be ascribed to want of power in the Holy Ghost, either to regenerate or sanctify. As Jesus Jehovah is almighty to redeem to the *uttermost*, the Spirit Jehovah is almighty to sanctify to the *uttermost* all who humbly depend on his aid. He can easily raise to life, to the life of grace and glory, "the very dead in trespasses and sins:" With one effort of his arm he is able to knock off the fetters of corruption and introduce the slave of satan into the liberty, the glorious liberty of a son of God: With one ray of his countenance, he

sheds immortal day on the most blind, benighted understanding: "He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines upon the heart, giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive be delivered? But thus saith the Lord the Sanctifier, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered, for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children."

4. Neither can the disappointment of any proceed from defect in the everlasting covenant. Myriads of the human race have embarked on this bottom, and none however weak, however worthless, however wretched, ever made shipwreck of their salvation, or were disappointed of their hopes. The sinner tottering on the brink of perdition, ready each moment to be overwhelmed by the billows of wrath, by cleaving to this celestial barge, hath reached the haven of everlasting rest.—Here "grace reigns" to the salvation of all without exception, who seek for it in the manner which God hath appointed. Here is pardon for the most guilty, holiness for the most polluted, merit for the most undeserving, the most debased; support for the most dejected; beauty for the most deformed; happiness for the most miserable; liberty for the most enslaved who will come in. "Incline your ear," is the

voice of abounding grace to all indiscriminately who enjoy the light of revelation; "incline your ear, and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." I therefore call you all *to record* that, if any fail of salvation, their failure cannot, without blasphemy, be ascribed to God, it does not arise from want of mercy in the Father, nor from want of merit in the Son, nor from want of power and grace in the Spirit; but must be charged utterly and everlastingly to the account of the sinner.

1. "Many are unable to enter in," because they do not seek with becoming earnestness and perseverance. They assume a profession of religion, they occasionally read their bibles, attend to the preaching of the word, and express their assent to the doctrines delivered: Sometimes they feel conviction of sin, under the terrors of the law, and perhaps through the common operations of the Spirit, and promises of the gospel they experience some gleams of hope, some emotions of joy but they advance no farther. Like the foolish virgins they "take up the lamps" of a profession, but are not careful to have them replenished "with oil." They do not exercise a holy industry in "making their calling and election sure:" They are strangers to the powerful operations of the divine Spirit by which "He convinces" effectually "of sin," of its evil nature as re-

and is universal joy on the most blind, benighted in darkness. "He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines upon the earth, giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive be delivered? But it is said the Lord the Sanctifier, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered, for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children."

Neither can the disappointment of any proceed from defect in the everlasting covenant. Millions of the human race have embarked on this bottom, and none however weak, however worthless, however wretched ever made shipwreck of their salvation, nor were disappointed of their hopes. The crew tottering on the brink of perdition, were each moment to be overwhelmed by the billows of wrath, by cleaving to this celestial rock, I all reached the haven of everlasting rest.—Here "grace reigns" to all of all without exception, in the manner which God has pleased. Here is pardon, forgiveness for the most guilty, most undeserving, most unworthy, most defensible, most miserable; for the most

voice of abounding grace to the infinitely gratefully who enjoy the light of revelation: "incline your ear, and come unto me: for your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the mercies of David." I therefore take this as a *record* that, if any fall, if a man's fallure cannot, without his own fault, be ascribed to God, it does not arise from want of mercy in the Father, nor from want of power in the Son, nor from want of power in the Spirit; but must be the consequence of unbelief and everlastingly to the account of the sinner.

1. "Many are unable to enter into the kingdom of heaven, because they do not seek with longing earnestness and perseverance. They make a profession of religion, they attend to their bibles, attend to the preaching of the word, and express their assent to the doctrines delivered: Sometimes they get conviction of sin, under the terror of the law, and perhaps through the convictions of the Spirit, and promises of forgiveness they experience some gleams of joy, and some

pugnant to the holy law and dishonoring to a holy God: neither are they duly convinced of the awful consequences of sin, as necessarily exposing to misery both temporal and eternal.

Such persons may possibly attain to considerable discoveries of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the excellence of his character, of the suitableness of his offices, of the necessity and all-sufficiency of his righteousness; but they never particularly close with *Him* as adapted to their own necessities: they do not rest their souls on his righteousness as offered to them in particular; they do not improve him as "their sanctification" to wash them from all their "filthiness both of the flesh and spirit," and therefore come short of salvation at last. It is not the Lord Jesus known in the head, but the Lord Jesus formed in the heart which gives a scriptural hope of glory: A mere persuasion that salvation is provided, a general apprehension or knowledge of Jesus the Saviour will not suffice. These doctrines are believed in hell by the damned, as firmly as in heaven by the redeemed. An application of this Redeemer, an appropriation of him in his righteousness, and offices, and fulness to our particular circumstances is indispensably necessary. "To as many," not as heard his name, not as possessed some knowledge of his character, neither as yielded a general assent to his doctrines, but "to as many as received him," as we receive bread for our

nourishment, wine for refreshment, clothes for comfort and ornament, "to as many as thus received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." A bare persuasion that the paschal lamb was sacrificed did not avail for the defence of the Israelites; it was the blood of the sacrifice sprinkled upon their door posts which sheathed the sword of the destroying angel.—Thus the blood of the cross must be sprinkled upon the conscience for redeeming from hell; the righteousness of the adorable Jesus must be imputed of God, must be appropriated by a living faith for entitling to the glories of his kingdom.

2. "Many are unable to enter in," because they do not seek in a proper, scriptural manner. They expect acceptance with God partly by works and partly by grace; partly by their own righteousness, and partly by the righteousness of the surety, and therefore fail of salvation at last. Such, we have reason to apprehend, is the condition of many who sustain the christian name, and disappointment, without a change, must be their inevitable doom. They rest satisfied with their own excellencies, their honesty, their civility, their moral, virtuous behaviour; they imagine themselves better than many around them, than some who probably make a noisy profession; they are not *extortioners*, they are not *adulterers*, they are not *swearers*, they are not sabbath-breakers, they impart of their substance for the

support of ordinances, they abound in deeds of charity to the poor; they resolve to do all they can, and hope that a merciful God, for Christ's sake, will overlook what is wanting. "Such may seek to enter in, but shall not be able." Salvation on these terms is utterly impossible. There is no accommodation between *works* and *grace*; there is no composition of our attainments, and the merit of Jesus in our reconciliation with the Father. We must either be justified wholly by *divine grace*, to the exclusion of human *works*, or wholly by human *works* to the exclusion of *divine grace*. Jesus Jehovah is jealous of his mediatorial honors, and will not divide them with the sinner.—He will either possess the whole glory of our salvation or receive no glory at all. We must approach as wholly destitute, as mere beggars, would we become interested in the "riches, the unsearchable riches" of our covenant head.—We must present ourselves as *naked*, stripped altogether of our personal excellencies, would we be adorned with the immaculate "robe of his righteousness. We must offer ourselves as wholly and desperately diseased, would we expect healing from this infinite Physician: We must approach as lost irrecoverably in guilt, as undeserving, as hell-deserving, would we desire remission of sin through his divinely precious, divinely meritorious blood. In short, free, sovereign grace, to the utter exclusion of created excellence, is the only

door to the region of immortality. We must either be pardoned *freely*, justified *freely*, adopted *freely*, sanctified *freely*, and glorified *freely*, or have "neither part nor lot" in the redemption of the Son of God. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us—that being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hopes of eternal life."—Let none therefore deceive themselves with unscriptural confidences at the peril of everlasting disappointment and confusion. Are they resting in whole or in part upon attainments of their own; are they courting peace to their awakened consciences, by any other remedy than the blood of the Lamb, "they may seek to enter in, but shall not be able."—Their building rests not on the rock of ages, but the sand of earth, which the lightnings of divine wrath will cleave to its foundation.

3. Many who seek salvation are finally disappointed, because they are too late in their application. They waste in the vanities of time their golden opportunities of mercy; they are busily occupied in their respective employments, some in amusements, others in sensual gratifications, others in the pursuit of worldly gain; while they find little leisure, and feel less inclination to regard their eternal concerns. During all this hurry of worldly employments, or this delusion of worldly pleasure their opportu-

nities of salvation pass speedily away, until their season of grace is ended, and the door of hope everlastingly closed. To such the Divine Redeemer obviously alludes in the passage before us, and therefore adds the following verse. "When once the master of the house is risen, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us, and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are."—How common, mournfully common is this delusion, this madness among us? What multitudes neglect from year to year, from one period of their life to another period, the weighty interests of eternity? They invert the order established by the Holy Ghost, and instead of "seeking first" they seek "last the kingdom of God," and consequently seek too late for admission—They postpone the work of their salvation from health to affliction, when the body and the mind, through the rage of disease, are equally unfit for reflection; from manhood to old age, when the spirits are broken by bodily infirmities, or to their dying moments hoping that they will then have time for repentance. When seized by the agonies of death they are instantly alarmed; they begin like the "foolish virgins to knock, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us:" they call for the elders of the church for the ministers of the gospel, and eagerly solicit an interest in their prayers: they groan out a cry for mercy, and

resolve immediate amendment if the Lord spare them, but all their prayers, all their resolutions are unavailing. "Their harvest is past, their summer is ended," the door of mercy is shut to open no more, the ears of an offended God are deaf to their most fervent entreaties. Justice, worn out with their delays, utters her last thunders, and with the lightnings of her vengeance cleaves the "cumberer" to the lowest hell. "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Thus seeking to "enter in, they are not able."

Have we not reason from this doctrine to apprehend that disappointment will be the end of many who are considered as good christians in the world? "The one thing needful" is almost the only thing neglected, the only object not sought with an earnestness becoming its vast, its inconceivable, its everlasting importance. View men in any pursuit, which concerns the present life; consider the sons of pleasure who are bent on self-gratification; the man of ambition who aspires after the preferments and honors of the world; or the covetous who supremely court its wealth. How eager, and unwearied are they in pursuing their different objects! No labor is considered too painful to be endured, no dangers too awful to be encountered, no reproach from their fellow mortals too degrading to be borne, no methods too mean to be embraced. Consider,

also, the man who is languishing under some inveterate, alarming disorder, with what diligence does he embrace every probable method of recovery: He calls a physician, he listens attentively to his advice, applies with care the medicines prescribed; if one application is unsuccessful he makes experiment of another; nay, he will sacrifice one part of his body, an arm, or a leg, as a means of preserving his life.—Thus prudent are “the men of this world in their generation.” But, alas, how simple, how slothful, how inconsiderate do most appear with respect to their everlasting concerns! Are not the newspapers read frequently with greater earnestness than the bible? Do not many discover more zeal in making sure the election of a favorite candidate to some post of honor or interest, than in making sure their own election of God to the glories of his kingdom? Are they not more anxious to secure their title to a particular house, or farm; or to make a profitable bargain in trade, than to secure their title to the inheritance of heaven, or appropriate as their own the “incorruptible riches of Jesus the Mediator? Brethren, is this “to take the kingdom of heaven by violence?” Can this be called “pressing towards the mark, or working out our salvation with fear and trembling?” Is this the *striving* urged by the Holy Ghost in the text; or such as will probably secure our entrance “into the kingdom of God? Be not deceived:” they have never yet sought religion

successfully, who have not sought it supremely; they have never been properly exercised about their souls, whose concern for their souls has not risen above every other concern.

2. Does it not become every individual immediately to ascertain his own spiritual character? "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith: prove your own selves." When the apostles were informed by their Master that one of them should betray him, each instantly inquired for himself, "Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I?" When we learn from the holy oracles that many who now expect salvation shall be finally disappointed, each professor of his religion ought to inquire, "Lord, is it I?" Am I only "reprobate silver," which shall hereafter be rejected of the righteous judge? Have I barely the lamp of a profession, without oil, the unction of the Holy One? the mask of religion, without its reality? to whom the great Master of the house will declare, "I know you not, whence you are." Would you, brethren, be satisfied on this all interesting inquiry? prove yourselves by the following marks. Have you ever been truly earnest in seeking the salvation of your souls? Have you considered it as a matter of everlasting importance, as incomparably more interesting than any other concern, than all other concerns, and therefore been determined on obtaining it; resolving, from a conviction that your eternal all is at stake, "to take the

kingdom of heaven by violence?" Have there been moments when like the holy patriarch you wrestled with the Redeeming Angel, refusing to "let him go without his blessing?" This is what in scripture is called "seeking first the kingdom of God;" or "giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2. Are you willing, are you desirous, to know your real character and condition; to know how you stand related to Jehovah, whether in a state of reconciliation, or of wrath? The superficial merchant is in a great measure regardless of his real situation; he is rarely employed in examining his books or balancing his accounts; he looks chiefly to the opinion entertained of him by his neighbors, and is satisfied with being considered as flourishing in his situation; but the more prudent will be frequently searching his books, comparing his credit and debt, to ascertain whether his condition be prosperous or declining. Thus the mere hypocrite rarely searches his own heart; he is little concerned about that mystery of iniquity which is there concealed; he is more anxious to know his character in the opinion of men, than his condition in the eyes of a holy God. But those who are really exercised to godliness are chiefly concerned about the inward man; they will occasionally turn their eyes upon their own hearts; and endeavor to detect those corruptions which malignantly lurk within; they will be fervently praying with

the holy Psalmist, "search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me;" they will be representing to the great Physician this and the other spiritual complaint, imploring the healing balm of his covenant: they will be acknowledging their secret faults, and open transgressions, asking forgiveness through the riches of his grace. 3. Are you willing to make any sacrifice which the scriptures require in pursuing this all important matter? "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Are you ready to crucify whatever inclinations tend to cloud the glory of Jesus, or interrupt the work of your salvation? Could you cheerfully mortify your most darling lusts; would you willingly bring your most beloved idols, and dash them against the cross of the Saviour? I do not inquire whether you are willing to crucify a particular inclination; most would consent to a sacrifice of that nature. One man is chiefly devoted to pleasure, to the gratifications of the flesh, and is regardless in a great degree of every other worldly consideration: Another man idolizes his wealth, saying to gold, "thou art my hope, and to fine gold, thou art my confidence," and, in the possession of this favorite object, could easily deny himself every other enjoyment: A third grasps at worldly honors, aspires after promotion in society, and little regards either amusement or gain.

Could you cheerfully crucify either, or all those inclinations for the enjoyment of Christ Jesus, and his salvation? It is this consideration which renders the gospel a "hard saying" to thousands; which renders the gate to glory too *strait*, too *narrow* for their admission. They would willingly be saved, but they desire salvation upon their own terms: Fondly they would inherit "the pearl of great price," but they are not disposed "to sell all" for that possession: They are not willing to give up their ease, and sinful pleasures, and unlawful gains. The inheritance of glory cannot possibly be attained on such terms. Jesus Jehovah came not "to save his people in their sins," but "from their sins;" not only to restore them by the atonement of his cross to the favor of God, but also by the operations of his Spirit to conform them to the image, and dispose them for the service of God. "If any man will come after me," was the challenge of the great "Captain of our salvation," in the days of his ministry upon earth, (and the terms of discipleship are precisely the same at this day) "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself;" he must become willing to *lose* his life in this world, that he may *save it* in the world to come: "Right arms" must be lopt off, "right eyes must be plucked out," our darling lusts must be sacrificed, or we shall not enter the kingdom of God. Holiness will be the aim of *all* the true followers of Jesus, although it is not fully at-

tained by any: although none are completely delivered from the power of any corruption, yet they deliberately give themselves up to the influence of no corruption. "Being made free" from the condemnation of sin through the atoning blood of the Lamb, "and become servants to God" by their own voluntary dedication, they will endeavor "to have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

3. This subject may be concluded by urging all immediately to comply with the exhortation of the text, "strive," earnestly "strive that ye may enter in at the straight gate." Surely if any thing be entitled to our unwearied pursuit; if any thing claim our constant, our ardent attention, by day and by night, it must be the happiness, the endless happiness of the soul. Awake, therefore, to a holy earnestness in securing this infinitely important concern.—"Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you." Reflect, beloved reader, that thou must succeed, or thy soul shall perish, and that for ever. As a mean of awakening you to becoming diligence and importunity, contemplate the prize to be obtained, "glory and honor and immortality; riches that are unsearchable; an inheritance that is incorruptible; a crown of glory that fadeth not away," and "palms" which shall flourish in immortal bloom; the communion of Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit, in his un-

utterable glories and consolations. Consider, on the other hand, the miseries to be avoided, “the blackness of darkness for ever; weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth; a lake which the breath of an avenging God like a stream of brimstone will set on fire.” These, brethren, are not my doctrines, then they might be regarded with indifference; they are the “true sayings of God,” and would to God you all heard them with a solemnity becoming the majesty of their author, and their immense, infinite importance. “He will render to every man according to his works; to them who, by patient continuing in well doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.” Read the procedure of the adorable Judge, and the final destiny of all men described in language, more interesting by the holy Evangelist. “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from the other, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the

kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Art thou unconcerned where will be thy station on that awful occasion, whether on the right hand or on the left hand of the judge? art thou uninterested to what thou wilt be awarded, whether to endless life or endless perdition? or wilt thou be indulged to stand merely as a spectator? "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth," thou, even thou thyself, whether bond or free, whether male or female, whether rich or poor, shalt constitute a portion of the throng, either of the damned or the redeemed; thine own eyes shall behold the judge in the full blaze of his glory; thine own ears shall hear from his lips thine unchanging destiny. Are all these miseries dreadful? shouldst thou not aim without delay to avoid them? Are all these joys, these glories desirable? shouldst thou not earnestly strive for obtaining them? O, my brethren, be not slothful in the great work of salvation. Is not the prospect of inheriting eternal life; "of shining as the sun in the kingdom of our Father; of being ever with the Lord, beholding his beauty, and satisfied" with his consolations, is not this prospect sufficient to prompt us carefully to use each mean of salvation? Read daily, read diligently, "the holy scriptures; they are all given by inspiration of God, and

are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness. These are written that ye might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name." Does the philosopher, merely to gratify his curiosity, search eagerly into the various appearances of nature? Does the student waste the midnight lamp in pursuit of knowledge, which is at best but *perishing* in its nature; which can impart no hope in a dying moment? and shall we neglect those scriptures "which testify of Jesus," and which, when sanctified by the Spirit of grace, "make wise unto salvation? Unto us are given exceeding great and precious promises," and salvation in these promises; and thanks be to God, they are all given that they may be read, and received into actual possession.— Again, attend diligently, and conscientiously the preaching of the word. No matter what opinion the world generally entertains of this ordinance. Although considered *feeble* by some, and *foolish* by others, it has in all ages been eminently countenanced for the conversion of sinners. "It has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Faith usually comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Of Zion it shall be said, this and that man was born in her." **THERE**, through the instrumentality of the gospel, and the agency of the sanctifying Spirit, they were convinced "of sin, and of righteousness, and of

judgment." **THERE**, they were driven to despair of any help, or hope in themselves, and were led to the covert of the Redeemer's blood as their only, and everlasting refuge. Suffer no opportunity of waiting on the sanctuary to be neglected. Thomas was absent at the first interview of our Lord with his apostles, and therefore was permitted to continue eight days in unbelief. Thus, if we are the children of election, by deliberately neglecting this means of salvation, we may be left days, and weeks, and months "to blindness of mind" and impenitence of heart. Again, pray ; frequently, fervently pray for the sealing influences of the Holy Ghost—without his co-operating grace, all your reading, and hearing, and meditating must be utterly unprofitable ; they will neither avail to the glory of God, nor your spiritual edification. When, therefore, you cast your eyes on the sacred volume, look up by earnest supplication in the name of Jesus that *he* would "open your eyes to behold wondrous things out of his law ;" that he would render it an effectual instrument of imparting light to your understandings, and holiness to your hearts. When the Sabbath draws near, let it be your prayer in secret, and as you approach the holy temple, that the steppings of Jesus Jehovah may be seen in his sanctuary ; that he would graciously direct the speaker to seasonable truths, and powerfully apply his message to your own heart, and the hearts of all.

May the Lord God enable you "so to run," that ye may at last "obtain the prize;" so "to strive," that ye may finally "enter his everlasting kingdom."

"Come from the four winds, O breath," thou Spirit Jehovah, who hast engaged in the eternal counsels to apply the salvation of Jesus, "and breathe upon our slain that they may live." And to thee the Holy Ghost, with the Eternal Son, and ever blessed Father, "the God of all grace" shall be ascribed thanksgiving and praise, in time and through eternity. AMEN.

SERMON III.

I JOHN V. 11.

This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

A MAN tossed upon the billows, and liable each moment to be overwhelmed, eagerly snatches the first object which promises relief. A man long afflicted with the gout, or gravel, or any other exquisite disorder, doomed to restless days and restless nights, anxiously improves each probable method of cure. To one who had languished in some loathsome dungeon; who had been shut out from the society of men, how cheering would be the light of natural day, or the pleasures of social life! To the wretch

who had pined days and months and years in abject servitude; who had been the sport of unfeeling oppression, and tortured with its iron chain, how reviving would be the prospect of liberty! To the man who stood convicted of some capital crime, and hourly expected the execution of the sentence passed upon him, how animating the message of pardon for his offence, and restoration to the privileges of a citizen! Inconceivably more cheering and reviving is the proclamation of peace and forgiveness to the guilty, self-condemned sinner; to him who feels in his conscience the forebodings of damnation, and is afraid every moment of "falling into the hands of the living God."

Sinner, is this thy condition? art thou by nature and practice an heir of the curse? does thy heart occasionally tremble, through fear of the execution of this curse? "Behold, I bring thee good tidings of great joy; unto thee is born a Saviour, even Christ the Lord:" for thee a full redemption is provided; to thee this redemption is freely, unconditionally offered. "This is the record that God hath given to us;" what? to be arrayed in scarlet; "to fare sumptuously every day:" to bear the palms of victory, or wear upon our heads the crown of royalty?—"A record" infinitely more precious is presented thee, "that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

On the last Lord's day, I endeavored to detect those false, unscriptural refuges to

which the awakened sinner too frequently has recourse. I attempted to point out the principal reasons, why many, "who seek to enter in," are finally disappointed. It is my present design, relying on the same grace for assistance, to direct your eyes to Jesus Christ, the true "covert from the storm," that "city of refuge," appointed by Jehovah, where the "avenger of blood" shall never overtake. "This life is in his Son."

This subject naturally suggests 1st, a privilege bestowed, *life*; or, as it is expressed in the preceeding clause of the text, "eternal life:" and 2d, it represents our Lord Jesus as the only medium through which it is bestowed, "this life is in his Son."

And may the Spirit of the Son descend graciously on every heart and seal our title to this "eternal life," while we are employed in proclaiming, and hearing the gospel of his salvation.

The life mentioned implies,

1. Justification through the righteousness of *the Son*, by which we become legally alive: by which act of the Father, imputing the atonement of Christ Jesus the Lord, we are acquitted from the sentence of condemnation, and entitled to future glory. The truth, beloved brethren, is alarming, but it is not less certain than alarming, that our condition is naturally a condition of *wrath*; that, as the offspring of *fallen* Adam, our representative in the covenant of works, we also have *fallen* from our original righte-

ousness ; and are therefore exposed, justly exposed to all misery both temporal and eternal. This is my condition, this is your condition, this is the condition of each individual of the human family without union to our Lord Jesus Christ the second Adam, and forgiveness through his blood. "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation. There is none righteous, no not one. What things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." But Christ Jehovah, the second Adam, as our surety, and substitute, has expiated our guilt : he has with his own blood cancelled "the hand writing that was against us, and, nailing it to his cross," has rendered it void for ever. He has by his vicarious death "abolished our death, finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness." How reviving is the testimony of the Holy Ghost concerning Jesus, and the perfection of his satisfaction ! This heavenly Witness multiplies language : He uses argument upon argument to convince that, in the Saviour's blood, there is eternal safety ; a reconciliation which never can be broken. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. By him all that believe ;" who improve his sacrifice for remis-

sion of sin, who acquiesce in his righteousness for reconciliation to God, "are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." His obedience being the obedience of Jehovah *made flesh*, was fully sufficient to expiate the guilt contracted, and restore the inheritance forfeited by the failure of Adam in the covenant of works. It is therefore styled "plenteous redemption;" an "everlasting righteousness; abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness;" and "his one offering" is represented in scripture as "perfecting for ever them that are sanctified." The living God, who is necessarily *just*; who will "by no means clear the guilty" without full satisfaction to his injured honors, "is now in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; pacified towards his people for all that they have done;" nay, HE *abundantly* pardons their transgressions. HE pardons *abundantly*; the gracious deed is infinitely pleasing to himself; it is perfectly consistent, nay, eternally glorifying to his perfections as the moral Governor of the world. Although "grace reigns, it reigns through righteousness;" these sister attributes of the Godhead perfectly concur and harmonize in this method of reconciliation; our justification through the sacrifice of the infinite Redeemer is an act of the strictest justice, no less than of the richest mercy.

2. The privilege expressed in the text implies *a life* of sanctification; *a life* which

consists in conformity to the image of God; and qualifies for his service and enjoyment. "I will put my Spirit within you," is the promise of this heavenly record, "I will put my Spirit within you, and ye shall live;" Jehovah the Redeemer, by the energies of his Spirit, breathes upon the sinner in the moment of regeneration, causes life to enter *him* who was formerly "dead in trespasses," and makes him spiritually alive, alive to God and his own eternal happiness. — This renovation of the heart forms an essential, yea, a principal part of that salvation, which was procured by Christ the Mediator of the covenant, and is promised in his gospel. The justification of the sinner is immediately in order to his sanctification; that, "being made free from sin, he might have his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." The eternally glorious Surety "gave himself for us, not only to redeem from all iniquity," to remove the curse by sustaining that curse, "to destroy death," by undergoing that death, "but also to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This spiritual life, which is manifested by love to God, delight in his ordinances, obedience to his commandments, submission to his will, and zeal for his honor, is a chief promise of the gospel, a principal blessing of the everlasting covenant, and may be justly numbered among the most precious fruits which grow on Calvary's cross. Next to the glory of

God, our restoration to the divine image and service is uniformly held forth in scripture as the great design of our recovery through the mediation of Jesus. "We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son: Chosen to be holy, and without blame before him in love: We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

3. This *life* implies eternal blessedness in the immediate presence and fruition of God: — "This is the end" of the believer's *faith*, the consummation of his joy. Grace in time is glory in the bud; glory through eternity is grace in the full blown blossom. The regeneration of the chosen tribes, their adoption, their pardon, their perseverance; their consolations here, are the "first fruits;" their glory hereafter is the "full matured harvest. These ransomed of the Lord;" those whom he has redeemed from the guilt of sin by the effusion of his blood, and from its dominion by the efficacy of his grace, "shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." In the present state, when our understandings are so clouded with ignorance, and our hearts so depraved by remaining corruption, we form very imperfect conceptions of the happiness of heaven; of the nature of that communion which "the spirits of the just made perfect" enjoy

with Jehovah, and their unspeakable blessedness in that communion ; yet, in condescension to our weakness, the joys of heaven are frequently held forth under natural images. In order to represent that dignity to which the redeemed shall hereafter be promoted ; to shew that complete, eternal victory which they have obtained over all opposition, heaven is called a “ kingdom which cannot be moved,” and the righteous appear “ sitting with the Mediator upon his throne, having palms” in their hands, and “ crowns of glory” upon their heads. Sometimes, to express the fulness of their joys ; to shew that their largest desires are completely satisfied, they are said to “ hunger no more, neither thirst any more :” Again, to teach us that their joys are not only boundless in their nature, but endless in their duration, that “ inheritance,” which as heirs of God they shall possess, is pronounced “ incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” To express the purity of their enjoyments, and to teach us, that without holiness here, there can be no happiness hereafter ; it is compared to “ a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.” So intimate, so endearing is the fellowship which the redeemed shall enjoy with their covenant Jehovah, that they are said to behold him, “ face to face ; to see him as he is,” and to “ know even as they are known.”—
 What shall I say more ? “ Eye hath not seen,

nor ear heard ; neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Eternity alone can unfold the infinite import of this record, " God hath given to us eternal life."

Some perhaps are ready to exclaim, "blessed are the people that are in this condition ;" highly favored they are indeed who may claim as their own "an inheritance" so great, unutterably great: But "wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" How can I secure my title to eternal life?"

Is such your inquiry? we proceed to answer it by illustrating the second proposition: "This life is in his Son," in Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

1. This life is in the Son of God as the original purchaser. Although the blessings of salvation are perfectly free to the sinner; made over as an absolute, sovereign gift; without any condition required on our part; yet they were costly, beyond expression costly to the Son of God. For the accomplishment of this salvation, he wept, and bled, and died. "Thou art not redeemed," believer, and let the consideration often melt thy heart with holy wonder, and raise from thy lips hallelujahs of praise to the condescending, suffering Saviour, "thou art not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and

without spot: He bare thy sins in his own body upon the tree, that thou being dead from sin mightst live unto righteousness." When thou art meditating on thy present privileges, the pardon of thy sins and the reconciliation of thy person, on thy translation from the rude, wretched family of nature, to the high dignity of a son of God, and an heir of eternal life; when thou art experiencing in thy soul the manifestations of thy Father's love, and rejoicing in the prospect of his more intimate fellowship hereafter, remember that to Jesus the Surety thou art utterly and eternally indebted. "He was wounded for thy transgressions; he was bruised for thine iniquities." For thee he stooped to the meanness of the manger; for thee he endured innumerable "sorrows through life;" for thee he underwent the more exquisitely painful sufferings in the garden and the cross; all these he underwent in thy nature, placed in thy covenant room, and bearing by imputation thy transgressions. "It became him, of whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory," in bringing thee to glory, "to make the Captain of thy salvation perfect through sufferings."

2. This life is in the Son of God as the glorious proprietor; as the great trustee of all the blessings of redemption. He is therefore represented in this capacity as "full of grace and truth; as having all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" as

possessing "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." It constituted a part of the Redeemer's humiliation, that he became the Father's servant as the purchaser; it also constitutes a part of his mediatorial glory, that he is now ordained the proprietor of the covenant with its boundless benefits. "The Father loveth the Son," delights in him as that illustrious personage through whose undertaking and offices "glory in the highest results" to himself, and never ending happiness to man, "and hath committed all things into his hand." The blood of the covenant, which procures the remission of guilt; the righteousness of the covenant, which constitutes our title to heaven; the grace of the covenant, by which we are restored to the image of God, and made meet for his enjoyment; the promises of the covenant, which are the great instrument of our sanctification, and support, all center in Jesus as the glorious proprietor.

3. "This life is in the Son of God" as the constant administrator; To him is entrusted the communication of all blessings, both in grace and glory; both in time and through eternity. He is the only medium of communion between an offended God, and an apostate world. "I am the door," he declares, "by me if any man enter in he shall be saved; he shall go in and out and find pastures." This is no inconsiderable part of his exaltation as Mediator, that he dispenses in the church militant on earth, and the

church triumphant in heaven, that salvation which he procured by the sufferings of his cross. He is now elevated as "head over all things to the church, which is his body; the fulness of him that filleth all in all: Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and Saviour to give repentance to Israel and remission of sin." He constantly intercedes, as the advocate within the veil, and sends down the Holy Ghost in his purifying influences and abundant consolations. His administration of the covenant, however, is not peculiar to this world, but shall continue in heaven through eternity. True it is, the Lord Jesus, at the general judgment, "will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father:" as a faithful servant he will render an account of his work fully accomplished; he will present the whole society of the redeemed, all that were chosen of the Father, all that were bought with his own blood, all that were sanctified by the Spirit, a "glorious church: He will justify his own procedure in every circumstance of bringing them into the covenant, of keeping them from final apostacy, and of building them up to the "stature of perfect men; but this surrender will only be temporary, and as it respects the present manner of administration; this mediatorial kingdom shall afterwards be assumed in a form more glorious and unchanging. To the Son as Mediator, as their common head, the redeemed from among men will continue subject for ever;

and through him they will remain most intimately related to each other, and to unsinning angels. Through HIM they will enjoy the most blissful, transporting fellowship with the Father and the Holy Ghost. As a prophet HE will eternally remain the light and glory of the Jerusalem above, and shining upon the understandings of his spiritual offspring, he will lead them deeper and deeper into the mysteries of redemption; he will enable them to form more exalted conceptions of that wisdom, and sovereignty, and condescension which are displayed in this wondrous dispensation. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it;" no need of ordinances, the word read, the gospel preached, the sacraments dispensed; "for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." The Son will continue through eternity "a priest upon his throne:" he will present himself as "the Lamb that was slain," exhibiting to his righteous Father the marks of his crucifixion, and demanding on this account a perpetuity of blessedness to his people. As a king, elevated to the highest glory, he will everlastingly stand forth the object of adoration and thanksgiving to the blessed inhabitants. The armies of heaven will pass in review before him; they will cast their crowns at his feet in the most profound humility, and with adoring lips worship him as "the Lamb that was slain, and redeemed them to God by his own blood. I beheld, and lo, a great multi-

tude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ; and cried with a loud voice, saying, salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.”

Thus our Lord Jesus will retain for ever his mediatorial character, and continue the inseparable bond of union between the Father and the redeemed. Through his person as Immanuel, the glories of the Godhead will burst forth upon them in inconceivable lustre, and their adorations in return ascend with acceptance to the Godhead. The Christian's life is therefore represented as “hid with Christ in God. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending of their present hope and future consolations.” In him all the promises were made from eternity past, and by him and through him they will all be executed through eternity to come.

“’Tis Jesus fills our hearts below,
With holy faith and heavenly love,
From Jesus all our joys shall flow
In the blest realms of light above.

Jesus, his love, his grace, his name
Pour gladness round the heavenly throng :
These all their golden harps proclaim,
These swell the notes of every song,”

Your own imaginations must naturally suggest the application of this doctrine.

Are we not justly called to admire and adore the goodness of God in thus appointing his beloved Son to be the Saviour of men ;

What, believer, was the procuring cause of thy reconciliation to that Sovereign whom thou hadst so often offended, and to whose wrath thou wast justly exposed? Was it "the blood of rams or of he goats?" These, however costly in themselves, were unequal to the demands of that justice which thou hadst provoked; of that law which thou hadst broken? "Thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil" could not have availed. Had creation been one altar, and all the lambs which sport, and all the oxen which graze upon ten thousand mountains one offering, the sacrifice must have been rejected of Jehovah.

Whom, christian, did HE substitute in thy room, and punish that thou mightst escape? Was it thy neighbor, thy kinsman, thy brother? This might have displayed distinguishing goodness to thee, but could never have brought glory to himself. "None could by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Who, then, was the surety and sufferer for sinful, perishing man? Was it an angel of light? one of those exalted seraphs or cherubs that approach near the uncreated Majesty, and shine in the glories of his throne? The offering, however precious, would have fallen infinitely short of the high demands. The sacrifice of all the angels in heaven could not have purged away the guilt of a single transgression.—Whom then did the eternal God offer as our sacrifice and propitiation? Hear, O breth-

ren, and admire ; hear and adore the wondrous truth. It was his *Equal* ; his Fellow ; “ the man of his right hand ; the Son of his love ; the brightness of his glory ; the express image of his person. He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Awake, O sword,” was the dreadful command ; a command not more full of wonder in itself ; nor more full of horror to the Surety, than of consolation to us ; a command which filled all heaven with amaze, and raises to their highest notes the harps of its shining throng ; “ awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts. Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him ? Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.” Let us all begin in time the employment of eternity, and aim at comprehending with all saints “ what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and heighth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.”

2. This doctrine may be improved for serious inquiry ; for an impartial examination of our spiritual condition. Have we a real interest in the blessings represented ? are we the legal heirs of this *eternal life* ? The reply to this question is short and simple. “ If we be Christ’s, then and not otherwise are we Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. This life,” says the word of

truth, "is in his Son," and by union to the Son of God, by appropriating him as the free gift of the Father, we become interested in this unspeakable blessing; we secure our title to all the promises of the Gospel, to all the privileges of the Saviour's purchase, to the inheritance of grace and glory.

As a means of assisting you in ascertaining your spiritual character, the following plain, scriptural marks are proposed. Have you ever been deeply convinced of your guilt, of your danger by nature, and brought to despair of recovery by any wisdom, or sufficiency of your own?—The sinner must discover his disease to be desperate; to be entirely beyond the skill of man or angel, before the great Physician will be employed, or the balm of Gilead, the healing influence of the cross, will be applied. The first office, therefore, of the Holy Ghost, in the application of redemption, is "to reprove, or convince the person of sin; to abase him in his own estimation by discovering his aggravated guilt, his deep pollution, his abject wretchedness. Thus HE throws the sinner at the feet of sovereign mercy, and obliges him, with the apostle, to cry out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Or, with Hezekiah the king, "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." The high towering imaginations of the man are then levelled; his pride and self-confidence are prostrated in the dust; he renounces his own wisdom as the veriest folly; his own righteousness as

mere guilt and condemnation ; his purity as loathsomeness and pollution ; every scheme of self-justification utterly vanishes, and he is willing that free grace become *all in all* in his salvation.

Again, "to them that believe," says one apostle, "the Lord Jesus is precious." The true circumcision is described by another apostle as "rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh." What think you of Christ the Saviour ? Does he appear in your esteem "altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousands ;" incomparably glorious in his promises, and relations, and righteousness, and salvation ? Are you rejoicing in his various offices ; delighting in him as your prophet, who enlightens the spiritually blind ; who gives all necessary instruction ; who has promised to guide by his counsel, and afterwards receive to his glory ? Are you glorying in his righteousness as your only confidence, as the only foundation of your acceptance with the Father ? When conscience accuses of guilt, have you immediate recourse to that fountain which he has opened for pardon, desiring to be justified freely through the redemption that is in him ? Are all approaches to the living God in the name of Jesus ; through his atonement and intercession ? Do you transact with the eternal God, meditate upon him, pray to him, covenant with him only as reconciled in Jesus Christ ? Do you also rejoice in the kingly office of the adora-

ble Immanuel? Do you glory in him, not only as “the Lord your righteousness,” but as “the Lord your sanctification?” Are you willing to bow to his sceptre of government, no less than to his sceptre of grace; to be ruled by his law, as well as reconciled by his righteousness? Examine yourselves particularly by this mark. Many there are who would willingly be saved by this divine Redeemer, who are not willing to be sanctified by him; they are desirous of being happy through eternity, yet are not desirous of being holy in time. But the offices of Christ cannot be divided.—Whom he pardons as a priest, he purifies and governs as a king. The designs of his death cannot be defeated, and “he gave himself for us not only to redeem from all iniquity, but to purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Brethren, I ask you again, is Jesus, the incarnate Jehovah, your chief joy? Do you glory in him as your righteousness and sanctification? Could you part with every thing in creation, “with houses, and lands, and brethren, and sisters; nay,” could you resign a thousand worlds, were they at your disposal, to be with him, and enjoy more fully the communications of his love? Then you may exclaim upon scriptural authority, “the Lord Jesus is my Saviour, and eternal life through him is my portion: Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength

and my song ; he also is become my salvation." Endeavor daily to be advancing nearer to perfection ; to be growing " in grace, and in the knowledge," and love, and admiration " of our Lord Jesus Christ." O brethren, the thousandth part of his glory has not been yet discovered ; the thousandth part of his consolations have not yet been experienced. His name " Immanuel, God with us," Jehovah yet Jesus, is truly wonderful ; it contains a mystery of wisdom, and condescension, and love, which the most eloquent tongue cannot describe, nor the most enlarged heart comprehend. Ten thousand angels, through ten thousand ages, could not unfold the ten thousandth part of its excellence and glory. His offices as our prophet, and priest, and king, so perfectly suitable to our circumstances ; his relations as our head, our husband, our shepherd, our father, our portion, our refuge, our guide, so divinely endearing in themselves, are an eternal source of wonder, and triumph, and joy. " Look," therefore, christian, at all times, and in all circumstances, " to Jesus as the author and finisher of thy faith," and the perfection of thy happiness. Let it be thy increasing desire " to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

3. This doctrine is replete with consolation to the children of God. What could a bounteous God have given them more ? He

has given "his own Son," and with him has made over to them the riches of grace and glory. Cast thine eyes, believer, through the whole universe; behold the heavens above; behold creation around, and say, is there any thing which thy tongue could mention, or thy heart desire, or thy imagination conceive, which is not thine own through the merits of precious Christ? "All things are thine, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come. All the promises are thine, yea and amen" in thy Lord Jesus; they are the foundation of thy present enjoyment, and the charter of thy future glory; all the ordinances are thine; they are the means of communion with thy dear Redeemer, until thy faith terminates in vision, and thy hope in fruition. All providences are thine; they are all obliged, through the overruling wisdom, and power, and compassions of thy covenant God, "to work together for thy good." All the angels in heaven are thine; they are "ministering spirits" to conduct, to support thee amidst the difficulties of thine earthly pilgrimage, and afterwards transport thee to the mansions of never-ending bliss. What shall I say more? Jehovah, in all his persons and with all his perfections is thine; his wisdom to direct thee in darkness; his power to uphold thee in distress; his all-sufficiency to supply each want; his mercy to sympathize in every affliction which may,

or can possibly befall thee ; his eternity is thine, as the period of thy duration, and his immensity as the measure of thy blessedness ; “all are thine, because thou art Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

Seeing all these are thine, believer, what remains for thee, but to live upon thy portion?—They are “given, freely given of God” that they may be fully enjoyed by thee. These blessings are not barely intended for thy felicity in heaven, but are also designed for thy support and consolation in travelling thither. The great God was not more cheerful in giving his Son as thy Saviour, than he is now willing to communicate all that is necessary for thy sanctification and comfort. “Ask, therefore, and receive, that your joy may be full: He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you can ask or think:” and glory to his name, HE is as gracious as HE *is able*. Hast thou some iniquity to be pardoned ; some transgression which lies heavy upon thy conscience ; which frequently ruffles thy inward peace, and destroys thy confidence in approaching a holy God? bring it to his cross for remission ; “here a fountain is opened ;” a fountain divinely meritorious, for the pardon of all thy transgressions. Precious truth, “the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth from all sin,” and, christian, this blood was shed that thou mightst apply it, and that, through the application, thou mightst possess “a peace which passeth all

understanding." Dost thou complain of some corruption which greatly prevails ; which haunts thee by day and by night : which steals away thy heart from the living God, that "thou canst not do the things which thou wouldst?" Through its malignant rage dost thou experience little peace in the fellowship of God, little consolation in the assurance of his love? Art thou obliged sometimes to groan out the ancient complaint, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Bring any corruption, and all the corruptions which disturb thee to the Saviour's cross. "From all thy filthiness and from all thine idols he will in due time cleanse thee : It is the will of God even thy sanctification;" it is the will of the Father who elected thee ; the will of Jesus who redeemed thee ; the will of the Holy Ghost who dwells in thee as his living temple, and shall certainly be accomplished. Go on, therefore, joyful in thy heavenly career ; and hourly "press towards the mark for the glorious prize ; be strong, only strong in the grace laid up for thee in thy redeeming Lord," and thou shalt come off "more than a conqueror." In darkness he will be "thy light ;" in bondage "thy liberty ;" in death "thy life ;" in fear "thy confidence ;" in distress "thy strong consolation." Nothing on earth or in hell ; nothing "present or to come shall be able to separate thee from his love," or stop thy progress to his heavenly

kingdom. Each revolving season ; each setting sun ; each fleeting moment will bring thee nearer that blessed consummation, when " corruption shall put on incorruption, and mortality shall be swallowed up of life ;" when thy harp shall no longer hang unstrung upon the willow, but be eternally tuned to " the song of Moses and the Lamb." There to Jehovah Triune, Father, Son and Spirit, who contrived from eternity, who executed in time, and will accomplish through eternity, our salvation, all heaven shall ascribe, and thou among the rest, equal adoration and praise.—AMEN.

SERMON IV.

ACTS, XVI, 31.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

THE Jailor, whose convictions are here noticed, proposed a question the most interesting and solemn ; one which intimately concerns our peace in life, our confidence in death, and our welfare through eternity : " What shall I do to be saved ?—How shall I escape that wrath to which I am justly exposed ? how shall I secure a title to that glory which I have altogether forfeited ?" The answer of the holy apostles, in-

spired by the Holy Ghost, is short and comprehensive: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It is worthy of our notice, that they did not direct this trembling inquirer to any duties of the law; they did not command, "keep the sabbath, reverence the sanctuary, search the scriptures, abound in charities to the poor, be instant in prayer; abstain from open pollutions, swearing, drinking, rioting; discharge with conscientious diligence thy duty to God, to thy neighbor, to thyself," Although all these duties are binding upon us, and are important in their own place, they are not important in the *first* place. These ministers of reconciliation, divinely taught, direct the sinner immediately to the Saviour; as diseased they point his eyes to the great Physician for healing; as ignorant, utterly blind to all that is spiritually good, they direct him to that Jesus "who is a light to lighten the gentiles;" as altogether destitute, involved in guilt, exposed to destruction, they lead him to that divine Redeemer who came "to seek and to save them that are lost; in whose blood there is redemption for the chief of sinners, according to the riches of his grace; as dead in sin," and polluted in every part, they direct him to that adorable Jesus who not only pardons but purifies; who is made of God to our perishing world not only *righteousness* to justify from guilt, but *sanctification* to wash off our pollution; they do not require him

to qualify himself for the reception of the Saviour by any holy performances, by repenting of his past transgressions, or resolving future reformation. This would be sealing up the "fountain of life," clouding the glories of free grace, and "saving the sinner as it were by the works of the law;" but they recommend him immediately to the everlasting Redeemer for pardon, for purity, for acceptance, for eternal life. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

The object presented to his faith is "the Lord Jesus Christ," the eternal Son of God, who appears in the character of Mediator; that adorable Personage who interposed in behalf of our perishing world; who assumed the nature of man, and by his obedience and blood procured "eternal redemption" for his people. He is called LORD as a BEING infinitely GREAT, possessing originally and independently all glory and dominion; KING of kings, and LORD of lords. The name JESUS exhibits him in the endearing relation of a SAVIOUR; as "bearing the iniquities of his people," and, by obeying the precept, and enduring the curse of the law in their room, "bringing in everlasting righteousness." He is denominated CHRIST, being actually appointed and anointed of Jehovah to this mediatorial undertaking. "Him hath God the Father sealed: Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for

the remission of sins." To this infinite Redeemer in his person and offices and salvation, the eye of the believing sinner is immediately directed: Him it eagerly "beholds as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world:" Him the sinner particularly appropriates, and improves for present grace, and future glory.

The privilege secured by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is "salvation; thou shalt be saved:" This was considered on a former occasion; it implies the same blessing with that "eternal life, which is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ," and was illustrated in the preceding discourse. It is sufficient to remark, that this salvation comprehends all that is revealed in the gospel; all that is secured in the promises; all that is contained in the covenant; all that is experienced in grace, or may be expected in glory; it implies all that was contemplated by the Father in his everlasting purpose of election; all that was procured by Jesus in his incarnation and sufferings and death; all that is applied by the Holy Ghost in the regeneration and sanctification of his people: This is the salvation expressed in the text, and is the real, unalienable privilege of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ: "He that hath the Son hath life; he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Our present design is to attempt illustrating that "faith which is the gift of God," and interests the sinner in this "great salvation:

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

To detain you, brethren, with any curious, refined disquisitions on the seat of faith in the human mind, whether it be placed in the understanding, or will, or affections is altogether unnecessary: This is equally unprofitable for you, and foreign to my present purpose. It is intended to state, in the most plain, scriptural manner, that faith which may be called a "saving grace;" which unites the soul to the Saviour; which, as an instrument, justifies the person in the sight of Jehovah, and is inseparably connected with future glory.

1. This believing implies a real, a firm persuasion that Christ Jesus the Lord is offered freely of God to sinners in general, and to me in particular, no less than others. Without this offer of the Saviour to mankind indiscriminately, to all without any exception arising from character, or age, or any other consideration, none would be warranted to receive him, and without a persuasion that he is tendered to me as one of the human family, I never can have confidence to embrace him for my own redemption in particular. If proclamation of pardon is made to a number of criminals, of which I constitute one, it is an impression that this pardon is designed for me, which will embolden me to present my plea: If a physician is appointed to superintend a number of persons diseased, of which I form

a part, it is a persuasion that he is appointed for me no less than others, that will encourage me to present my diseases for healing. This persuasion that Christ Jesus the Saviour is offered to me, and that I may apply him for my salvation is founded on the authority of God, as frequently and positively expressed in his word. "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.—This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. In this was manifested the love of God to us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we should believe through him. He hath so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life." To shew that salvation is tendered to all without exception, and that every individual who will, may approach, the gospel is called "good tidings of great joy to all people : " Christ Jesus is pronounced "the Saviour of all men ; a propitiation for the sins of the whole world." He is revealed in the word of truth as ready immediately to accept, and eternally to save all who apply. THE EVERLASTING GOD, THE KING OF KINGS, who appointed this great ambassador, is exhibited as "reconciling the world unto himself ;" as announcing the general jubilee of release to all offenders of the human family : "HO, EVERY ONE that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; look unto

me, and be saved, ALL ye ends of the earth: Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

From this divine testimony, as the instrument, the sinner is persuaded that Christ is indeed the Saviour of the world; the ordinance of heaven for the reconciliation of men, and from the unconditional offer of the gospel to all, he believes that this Jesus is free for himself in particular; that he is the grant of Jehovah not only to the human family in general, but to himself as one of that family, and that he is authorized to receive him as such. This is generally called the assent of the understanding to the gospel of Christ; it is founded on the testimony, the promise, and oath of the living God, and is the first operation of the Holy Ghost in bringing the sinner to the Saviour. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through his name."

But the duty enjoined does not consist barely in assenting to the gospel of Jesus; in believing the inspired record concerning his undertaking, and righteousness: It implies,

2. The actual reception, the particular appropriation of the Lord Jesus Christ as freely given of the Father, and held forth

in the gospel. It is this personal application of the general promise, and Christ in the promise, which constitutes the very essence of justifying faith; it is this act, this appropriating act, which gives the actual possession of Jesus and his salvation; which completes the union between the sinner and the Surety, and gives him a real, an inviolable interest in all the blessings of his purchase. The soul, thus joined to the Lord the Saviour by a faith divine, receives remission through his blood, justification through his all perfect righteousness, and that work of grace is begun which shall infallibly issue in future glory.

The necessity of this particular appropriation of Christ and his benefits, is obviously founded on the reason of things. Bread cannot nourish the body unless received, nor clothes either warm or adorn unless they are put on; medicine cannot heal a disease unless administered to that disease, nor water wash off pollution unless applied to that pollution; wine in the glass will not refresh or exhilarate, nor water in the brook quench our bodily thirst; a rock administers no rest to the weary traveller unless he recline upon it, neither will a house shelter from the gathering storm unless we hide beneath its covert. Thus saith the heavenly oracle, "unless ye eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of Man;" unless ye as really apply to your souls Jesus, and his righteousness, and fulness, as, in eating and drinking,

ye incorporate with your bodies the bread and the wine, "ye have no life in you : " Again, " he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

That this particular appropriation is essential to saving faith is equally evident from those various acts by which this grace is expressed in scripture. Sometimes it is defined a *receiving* Christ, as we reach forth the hand, and receive a gift from him who offers it. " As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him : To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name." Sometimes it is expressed by *putting on* the Saviour, as a garment is put on either for ornament or comfort : " Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh. He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation ; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." Occasionally this faith is defined a *coming* to Christ, as we approach a fountain for washing, or as we draw near to a friend for the purpose of receiving, or offering a present. " He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

This doctrine of appropriation may be infered with equal confidence from the language of the redeemed both in the Old Testament and the New. " I know," was the exclamation of one, " I know that my Re-

deemer liveth ; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold him." David, the man after God's own heart, and sweet singer of Israel, breaks forth in language equally appropriating, and triumphant ; " He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure ; this is all my salvation, and all my desire : The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer ; my God, my strength in whom I will trust ; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." The lofty, evangelic Isaiah frequently indulges himself in the same appropriating strains, " Behold, God is my salvation ; I will trust, and not be afraid ; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength, and my song, he also is become my salvation." These inspired writers were not contented with knowing that the Son of God appeared for the redemption of mankind, but applied him for their own redemption in particular : They were not satisfied with resting upon Jehovah as covenanted with the nation of Israel, but received him, rested upon him, rejoiced in him as Jehovah in covenant with themselves through the undertaking, and offices, and intercession of the " Word made flesh. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge, and my fortress ; my God, in him will I trust."*

* As the doctrine that a particular appropriation is essential to saving faith is doubted by some, and denied by others, it may not be unprofitable to offer the sentiments of various, distinguished divines on this subject. I introduce their remarks with greater pleasure and confidence, as they were men not only of acknow-

By this reception of God the Saviour, as presented in the promise, the believer becomes interested in his unsearchable riches and everlasting salvation ; he is constituted

ledged piety, and learning, but lived in different ages, and belonged to different countries, and communions. I begin with a quotation from the most learned, and profound Dr. Owen. "The use of faith is to take, or receive what is tendered, offered, given or granted to us ; to apprehend, or lay hold of, thereby making it our own." Again, he remarks, "whereas the righteousness, wherewith we are justified, is the gift of God which is tendered to us in the promise of the Gospel, the use and office of faith is to receive, apprehend, or lay hold of, and appropriate this righteousness."—*Owen on Justification, p. 184—5.*

With the foregoing quotation correspond the sentiments of the correct, and judicious Dr. Guise. "As by eating, and drinking material provisions, they are digested, and become one with the body for the support, and comfort of its present frail life ; so he who by faith receives me, together with my benefits, into his heart is thereby united with me, as a member of my mystical body ; I dwell in him by my Spirit, and he dwells in me by faith for all the purposes of maintaining his spiritual life, till it shall reach its utmost perfection in heaven."—*Guise's paraphrase on John, chap. 6, v. 56.*

Equally pertinent to our present purpose are the following remarks of that very able and successful minister of reconciliation, *Ebenezer Erskine*. "What lay before in common to all in the offer, the soul by faith brings home to itself in particular, and like *Simon*, takes Christ in its arms, saying, my Lord and my God ; I offer him, Christ, for thy wisdom, saith God ; and I embrace him as my wisdom saith Faith ; I offer him as thy righteousness, who art a condemned criminal, saith God ; and I embrace him as my righteousness, saith Faith ; I offer him as thy sanctification who art a polluted sinner, saith God, and I embrace him as my sanctification, saith Faith."—*Erskine's works, vol. 1, page 185—6. Edin. ed.*

The necessity of this particular appropriation has been vindicated with equal elegance of language and ability of argument by the late eminent *Mr. Romaine*. "Suppose you are perishing of hunger or thirst, setting meat and drink before you will not save your life unless you use them ; if you are naked and almost frozen, will clothes warm and save your life which you never put on ? So Christ is the medicine of the sin-sick soul, but if his virtue be not applied, if his medicine be not taken, how can it work a cure ? So he is the bread of life, but unless he be taken and verily received as spiritual food, how can he support the life of God in the soul of man ? So Christ is the clothing of his people ; but how can he be their clothing if they never put him on ? Surely then ther•

one spirit with Christ Jesus the Lord; he becomes strong through his strength, wise through his wisdom, righteous through his righteousness imputed, and holy through his holiness imparted; he is made a *fellow-heir* with the *Heir of all things* in the unutterable fulness of his grace, and in all that glory which shall hereafter be revealed; he secures an interest in the promises as his charter; in the covenant as his rightful claim to future happiness; in Jehovah as his Father and Friend. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." The believer is always warranted, and in the exercise of grace, he is enabled to exult, *my Beloved is mine, my righteousness for reconciliation, my strength for support, my shepherd to supply, my sun to enlighten in all darkness, my shield to defend in all danger:*

is great judgment in that saying which our reformers had so much in their mouths, an unapplied Christ is no Christ, he is no Christ to that sinner to whom he is not applied, and therefore he is not his beloved nor his friend."—*Romaine's works, vol. 5, page 201. Lond. ed.*

Such are the sentiments of divines whose praise for piety and purity is in all the churches. It is a consideration peculiarly pleasing, a circumstance peculiarly encouraging to our faith, that men who appeared in different ages, who appertained to different communions, who entertained different sentiments respecting the outward order of the church, should completely harmonize in a doctrine which so intimately concerns the honor of Jesus, and the spiritual peace, prosperity and glory of his people.

“This is my Beloved and this is my Friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.”

3. The exercise recommended in the text implies a constant, entire reliance upon the offices, and fulness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The necessity of “believing on the Son of God” does by no means terminate on our first union to his person; that faith in his atonement, and all-sufficiency which then commences ought to be continued through life; we ought every day, and hour, and moment to be improving those riches of wisdom and grace, which are treasured up in our redeeming Jehovah. This is termed in scripture, “abiding in him; living by the faith of the Son of God; being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; growing up into the measure of the stature of his fulness.” This was the life after which the great apostle aspired as his supreme felicity and glory. “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me.” This attainment he most affectionately asks in behalf of the believing Ephesians. “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven, and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted

and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

In proportion as this principle of faith is preserved vigorous and active, will spiritual life, and evangelic peace, and heavenly consolation abound in the soul: real holiness will sit enthroned in the heart, and "the fruits of righteousness, and temperance," and "godliness" will adorn the life, and conversation. Believers, in the exercise of this grace, hold communion with the everlasting Redeemer in all his offices; they depend upon him as their prophet for leading them deeper and deeper into the mysteries of his gospel; for giving them clearer discoveries of themselves, and of his suitableness to their worthlessness and wants: They improve the atoning blood of this *High Priest* for the remission of their daily transgressions, and plead his righteousness as the foundation of their confidence in every approach to the Father: They rely on him as their King to rule in them and over them: to subdue every corruption of their hearts, to give them victory over their spiritual adversaries, "to keep them from falling," from being ensnared by those temptations of the world by which his glory might be clouded, the generation of the righteous grieved, their own consciences disquieted, and the ungodly em-

boldened in transgression. Thus it is their security, and glory, and should be their daily desire, "to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;" to stand "complete in" Jesus "who is the Head over all things to the church," and to each particular member of the invisible church, "which is his body; the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Such is the import of the duty enjoined in the text: and may "the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing," while we apply these truths in the following inferences.

1. We learn from this doctrine that believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving him as the free gift of the Father, and relying on him for eternal life, is not only the privilege, but the duty, the incumbent duty of each individual; it is the highest possible act of obedience which can be rendered to the everlasting God. When the sinner obtains some discoveries of his guilt and wretchedness, he is afraid to look towards the Saviour, he considers himself infinitely unworthy of such a gift; he imagines that it would be the most daring presumption, and even blasphemy for such a wretch as him to approach the adorable Jesus, or accept his great salvation. Let us for a moment bring this objection to the sacred scriptures, and weigh it in this unerring balance. Is it presumption to open this heavenly volume, and read the oracles of revelation? No; because God hath commanded, "search the scrip-

tures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life." Is it presumption to approach the throne of the Eternal by prayer and supplication, either in public or private? No; because HE positively enjoins, "pray without ceasing; in every thing by prayer and supplication let your request be made known with thanksgiving." Is it presumption to sanctify the sabbath; to set apart one day in seven from worldly to spiritual purposes? No; because the Lord of our time has solemnly commanded, "remember the sabbath to keep it holy: turn away thy foot from the sabbath from doing thy pleasure on my holy day." Is it presumption for me, if regularly called, to entreat with sinners "to be reconciled to God;" to proclaim a free salvation through the Redeemer's name? No; because Zion's King requires, "preach the gospel to every creature: teach all nations, baptizing them: thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me." Is it presumption in you to attend on the duties of the sanctuary, to unite in the various exercises of prayer, of praise, of hearing the word of reconciliation? No; because the same adorable Lawgiver has commanded, "forget not the assembling of yourselves together; bring an offering and come into his courts; worship the Lord in the beauties of holiness." Neither is it presumption for any sinner, for any son or daughter of Adam "to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," to appropriate him as their own with his covenant

fulness, and eternal consolations. "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent: This is his commandment that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." The fountain is opened, "whosoever will may" draw near, and "drink, and live for ever:" The stores of the covenant are spread before you, "eat ye that which is good, and let your souls delight themselves in fatness:" the pardon is issued out, a pardon written in the blood of God the Saviour, whosoever will may reach forth the hand of faith and freely receive it. Thou man, thou woman art as really authorized to embrace the Eternal Surety, and his plenteous redemption, as thou art authorized to set apart this day for spiritual exercises, or to enter this sanctuary to hear the message of peace. Thou, whosoever thou art, whatever may be thy age, or character, or condition, thou art as really warranted "to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God" by a living faith; to appropriate the ever glorious Redeemer with all the blessings of his salvation, as thou art warranted to take the common bread when hungry, or the natural water to quench thy bodily thirst. Thou art as really authorized by the gospel message to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and eternal life through his name, as thou art authorized to breathe the natural air, or walk in the light of the natural sun. "This," brethren, "this is his commandment;" his most positive, his repeated com-

mandment "that we should believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ."

2. It becomes all immediately to inquire whether they have complied with the injunction of the text. Eternal truth has pronounced "faith in the Lamb that was slain" as the very hinge on which our salvation turns: it pronounces our believing or not believing as the very circumstances which form our character as children either of glory or of wrath; as heirs either of salvation or damnation. "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God; he is condemned already," the sentence is actually passed against him, he is really dead in law, dead in the eye of Jehovah's justice, "dead in trespasses and sins." THE HOLY ONE OF GOD has taught the same truth in a different passage, "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him." Awful consideration! "the wrath of God abideth upon him; whether idle or employed; whether alone or in company; whether sitting in the house or walking by the way; whether more grave in the temple or riotous in the tavern, wrath is his condition; the sentence of death is upon him; the sword of death hangs over him, and "hell from beneath moves to meet him at his coming." Suppose I should now go from seat to seat,

from individual to individual in this congregation, and propose to the conscience of every man, "dost thou believe in the Son of God? art thou rejoicing in Christ Jesus with no confidence in the flesh?" what would be your reply? Dare you answer, with all the sincerity of the trembling disciple, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief;" or with the apostle, "yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord—that I may win Christ, and be found in him:" or have you rarely reflected on the necessity of this grace? Have you remained satisfied with a general knowledge of the Saviour, without any particular application of him to your own circumstances and necessities? If such be your character, let me entreat you by "the tender mercies of our God" to awake from your lethargy "to turn to the strong holds while you are prisoners of hope; to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that ye may be saved." By this act, this appropriation of the offered Saviour, ye will fulfil a direct, solemn command of Jehovah; ye will glorify all the persons in the Godhead: ye will honor the all-gracious Father, who "sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world; who gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life;" ye will honor the Lord Jesus Christ, who "emptied himself of his glory;" who was made of no reputation; who stooped to become a "man of sorrows and

acquainted with grief" for the redemption of sinners: By coming to the Saviour, and improving his righteousness for your reconciliation, ye will make him, if the expression may be used, some compensation for all the reproach and sorrows of his life; for the deeper humiliation, and more exquisite sufferings of his cross; in your salvation through faith in his blood "he will see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied:" Ye will honor the Holy Ghost, who comes in the Saviour's name and testifies of his excellence, his suitableness, his sufficiency and glory; ye will glorify all the perfections of God, his wisdom, which contrived from eternity this method of restoring our ruined world; his justice, which is *pacified*, completely *pacified* through the blood of the infinite Redeemer; his truth, which has executed upon him as the Surety all the curses which were denounced against the sinner; his grace, which beams with the brightest splendors in saving the chief of sinners, the most guilty, the most foul of the human family through the redemption of Christ: Thereby ye will secure to yourselves the remission of sin, the adoption of sons, a joint heirship with Jesus to all the blessedness and glories of his everlasting kingdom: Precious, precious truth, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."

Is this plan of salvation through faith in

the Redeemer's name in all respects so eligible? does it bring glory in the highest to Jehovah; peace, adoption, eternal life to men? will ye not be persuaded to acquiesce in this plan? Shall all the love, the unmerited love of the Father in giving his Son, and his authority in commanding you to believe; shall all the compassions of the Son in coming, in suffering, in dying for your redemption; shall all the long-suffering of the Holy Ghost in tenderly expostulating with you from day to day; shall all the freedom of the promises in presenting these blessings "without money and without price;" shall all the anxiety of ministers who secretly "travail as it were in birth for your salvation," or their diligence in publicly beseeching you "in Christ's name to be reconciled to God;" shall all the concern of *the bride*, the redeemed in glory who bends from her throne and unites her entreaties with the *Spirit*, saying, *come*; shall compassion on your own souls which are intimately and everlastingly concerned: shall all these considerations have no influence in prevailing with you to return? Let none object, I have no warrant to believe, because "God has given his only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER believeth in him might not perish;" and the Spirit invites, "WHOSOEVER will to take of the water of life freely." Let none object, these blessings are not for me; I am unworthy of any benefit, much more unworthy of a benefit so great as eternal life;

because Christ Jesus the glorious treasurer of the covenant "has received these gifts for men;" yea, for the **REBELLIOUS**; "he came not to call the righteous, but **SINNERS** to repentance; to seek and to save them that are **LOST**;" to heal the **spiritually sick**; to bind up with his covenant consolations the **BROKEN HEARTED**; to proclaim liberty, even eternal redemption, to the lawful **CAPTIVE** of sin and hell: Let none object, "these promises, these invitations are not for me;" dost thou belong to the human family? art thou a son, or daughter of Adam? "to thee is the word of this salvation sent;" to thee the promise is endorsed, made over, and thou mayst freely and particularly apply it.— "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if **ANY MAN** will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and sup with him, and he with me." Neither let any object, "my transgressions are beyond the reach of mercy; there can be no remission, no salvation for such a slave of corruption as me;" because "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from **ALL SIN**." Hast thou been a *fornicator, an idolater, an adulterer, a thief, covetous, a drunkard, a reviler, an extortioner?* *such were some of the Corinthians*; "but they were washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." For the Lord's sake believe in his name that thou mayst be saved; flee without delay, flee at all hazards "to that blood of sprinkling which

speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." Hast thou any concern for the glory of God? hast thou any compassion for thy own soul? yield not up to the power of unbelief; while this prevails to keep thee from looking to Jesus and "submitting to his righteousness," thou art making "the God of truth a liar;" thou art "confirming," voluntarily "confirming thy covenant with death and thine agreement with hell;" thou art pouring contempt, the most deliberate, daring contempt upon all the attributes of God, which shine with such glory in the face of Jesus Christ. "Harden not thy heart any longer" by indulging a carnal ease, a shameful indifference or unbelief, lest thy "bands be made strong;" lest he who has long "waited to be gracious," who now "waits to be gracious, shortly swears in his wrath that thou shalt not enter into his rest. Incline your ear and come unto him: hear and your souls shall live, and he will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

3. The redeemed of the Lord are admonished of their duty from the present passage. It is a very mistaken opinion that the necessity "of believing in Jesus" ceases when the soul is once united to his person, and justified through his righteousness. This exercise ought to mingle with every service we perform, and every blessing we enjoy: "Whatsoever we do, in word or in deed," is the apostolic injunction, "do all

in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." This reliance on Christ Jesus Jehovah ought to be cherished and promoted each day and hour of our lives. "In him as our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, we ought, as christians, "to live, and breathe, and move:" to resist every temptation; to encounter every adversary; to endure every difficulty, and aim at the discharge of every duty. "Faith is the shield with which we quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one;" this living principle "worketh by love, it purifieth the heart and overcomes the world." I press with more earnestness the duty of a constant, an entire dependence on the Son of God, because this trust on his all sufficiency forms the whole mystery of practical godliness; it constitutes the safety, and glory of the christian. "He that abideth in me, and I in him," is the declaration of our Lord, "the same bringeth forth much fruit, even all the fruits of righteousness, for without me ye can do nothing." What was it that rendered primitive believers so stedfast in their christian walk; so cheerful in every possible circumstance of distress; that enabled them "to glory in tribulation, to receive joyfully the spoiling of their goods," to part with father, or mother, or brethren, or sisters, in the cause of their Master; to exult amidst all the rage of persecution; to sing praises in prisons and on scaffolds? All this patience,

and fortitude, and triumph arose from this single consideration, "they were strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus: They overcame," as one of their brightest ornaments declares, "they overcame by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; They were more than conquerors," as another hero of the cross informs us, not by any strength or resolution of their own, "but through him that loved them." Read the golden history of their triumphs in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Through faith they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Wouldst thou, christian, imitate this illustrious army of martyrs; wouldst thou be conformed to them in their self denial and contempt of the world, in the ardor of their zeal and steadfastness of their hope, like them "be strong in the Lord Jesus and in the power of his might." Praise, eternal praise to his name, his offices, his righteousness, his covenant, his promises are the same now that they were then; that fulness of grace, out of which evangelists, and apostles, and martyrs, and confessors were strengthened, being "the fulness of the Godhead bodily," is yet unexhausted, will be to eternity inexhaustible, and he is as willing to communicate to your wants as to theirs. "Ask, therefore, and re-

ceive that your joy may be full." The more freely that you derive from the plenitude of his grace, the more constantly that you rejoice in the prospect of his salvation, the more he is delighted and glorified.

Is such the life, christian, which thou art now "living in the flesh? Art thou coming up from the wilderness," this vale of corruption and sorrow, depending on Jesus as thy beloved, thy portion, thine all? Then rejoice, and be exceeding glad, "for behold thy redemption draweth nigh." Shortly, very shortly faith shall be lost in full vision, thy hopes shall terminate in actual fruition; then thine eyes shall behold thy BELOVED in the unclouded blaze of his glory, and thy heart shall be filled to the very uttermost with his abundant consolations,—AMEN:
Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

SERMON V.

2 CORINTHIANS, v. 20.

We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

WE lately attempted to discuss the nature of that faith by which the sinner becomes united to the Saviour; we endeavored to prove that it consisted in a cor-

dial acceptance, a particular appropriation of Christ, as adapted to our wants, and held forth in the promise ; in constantly rejoicing in, and living upon his righteousness and fullness for pardon, for perseverance and consolation.

The present passage contains a pathetic invitation for sinners to *return and live*. The apostle appears under the character of a suppliant, and earnestly solicits them to comply with the gracious overtures. "God," as if he had said, "is reconciled to you, his law is magnified, his justice is appeased ; the curse denounced against transgression has been fully executed upon the infinite Substitute ; the flames of divine wrath are quenched by his precious blood ; the cup of divine indignation, swelled to the brim by human guilt, has been exhausted to its lowest, bitterest dregs by the Son of God in your nature, in your stead ; every obstacle on the part of heaven is now removed ; good will has been proclaimed on the part of the Judge ; Jehovah can "be just and the justifier of the ungodly that believe in Jesus Christ ; " all now remaining to complete the reconciliation, to restore you to the favor of the Eternal, and constitute you heirs of grace and glory, is that "you be reconciled to God ;" that you submit to the righteousness of his Son ; that you renounce your weapons of rebellion, and bow to the sceptre of grace as extended in the gospel ; only acknowledge and embrace the Lord

the Redeemer, for salvation, and all hostilities between God and you shall instantly cease ; the offence of your former apostacy shall be eternally forgotten ; a peace shall ensue, which all the intrigue of earth or hell shall not be able to interrupt."

In order the more movingly, the more successfully to urge his entreaty, the apostle uses the weightiest argument possible, "we pray you in Christ's stead," as commissioned by his authority, as bearing by office his image, as appearing in his name, as constrained by his love, as impressed with the consideration of his awful presence, as expecting hereafter to render an account of our stewardship at his appearing and kingdom, we thus "pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God."

As I am called of God, however unworthily, to the ministry of reconciliation ; and as it is the chief design of that office "to espouse sinners to Jesus the ever-glorious "Bridegroom," and thus interest them in the favor of the Eternal King, suffer me to mention some considerations encouraging you to come in ; to propose some arguments pressing you all this day "to be reconciled to God—and while these considerations are proposed, may the love of Jesus be shed abroad through every heart ; may it constrain many, may it constrain all in this assembly to acquiesce this hour in the offered reconciliation.

1. I would pray you by the love of the

Father manifested in giving his Son, in delivering him up to shame, to poverty, to death, even the painful and accursed death of the cross *as a ransom* for our transgressions. This was, with reverence be it spoken, this was the highest possible display of good will to a lost world which Jehovah could afford. When no inferior sacrifice could suffice; when the "blood of rams, of lambs, of oxen" was unavailing to purge away the malignity of human guilt, or restore the injured glories of the divine government, "then HE delivered up his own Son." Surely the reconciliation of the rebel must have been desirable to the Sovereign when he would accomplish it by a method so singular, a price so astonishing as the degradation and death of a "beloved, an only beloved Son." With holy submission to the unsearchable wisdom and sovereignty of God may we not ask, what could he have done more? What more striking, commanding proof of love could he have exhibited? What costlier scheme of restoring our rebel race could he have either conceived or executed? This truth so astonishing is frequently mentioned in scripture as an argument encouraging the sinner to return. "God so loved the world;" the evangelist, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, appears to labor for language to express the wondrous fact; no comparison can be brought in to illustrate the thought; it stands without a parallel in the known trans-

actions of God: it must be resolved into his absolute sovereignty and good pleasure; "he so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son:" the fact is not more wondrous, than the design is gracious, "that whosoever believeth on him," for this very purpose, with this very intention; that "whosoever" of the human family, whatever individual of the posterity of Adam that has departed from the living God, and is sunk in sin, whatever man or woman of all this race "believeth in him," will cast themselves on his mercy, and improve the sacrifice which he offered up, "may not perish," may not be ruined irrecoverably for their rebellion, "but have eternal life," be restored to the favor and fellowship of their offended Lord.—Again—"him hath God set forth," appointed, ordained, and not only ordained but revealed plainly in the promise, held out openly on the pole of the everlasting gospel with this gracious design, "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Suffer me to apply this consideration to your consciences. Do you believe these declarations respecting the love of God in providing a Saviour for fallen man? Is this message "true, that the Father sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world; that

he made him to be sin for us who knew no sin," for this very purpose, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him?" Do you credit this heavenly record, that "God hath given us eternal life in his Son?" and yet do you not believe that he is willing to receive you when returning in the name of his Son? Are you persuaded, that he appointed the "brightness of his own glory to become flesh," to shed his precious blood for the redemption of sinners? and yet will you not believe that he is ready to pardon you improving and pleading this redemption? Did mere love to you, pure compassion to your miseries move the Father to appoint that glorious Person for purchasing our salvation? and yet will he refuse the salvation, when purchased, to those who embrace it? Reason and revelation reject the thought. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." Meditate frequently on the Father's love, the freedom, the sovereignty, the immensity of his love in providing a Saviour, and by this consideration be encouraged, be exhorted "to be reconciled unto God."

2. I would pray you by the compassions, the condescension, the sufferings, the death, the agonizing death of the great God our Saviour, "be ye reconciled to God." Why did *the Son of God* become the son of man? why did the *Father of eternity* become a child of yesterday? *the mighty God* become

a helpless babe? the Lord of angels, the Ruler of the universe stoop to the condition of a servant? the ever-living, life-giving Jehovah become obedient unto death, even "the death of the cross?" Why this meanness of Bethlehem's manger? why these numerous exquisite sorrows of life? why this pressure of spirit, this bloody sweat, these melting groans of Gethsemane? why this ignominy, this agony, this decease, which were accomplished on Calvary's mount? The answer is plain, that he might "reconcile us to God by his blood;" that he might bring salvation to man, in consistence with the honor of his Father: To prepare for the introduction of "many sons to glory," Jesus "the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. He gave himself for us," in our room, in our stead, "to redeem from all iniquity," to rescue from that guilt in which we were involved by transgression, "and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Pause a moment, brethren, and say, was ever love so immense as the Saviour's love? attend, and survey in solemn thought the affecting scene; "behold the Lord of glory," as the child Jesus, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger;" pursue him through the various stages of his life; "he is despised and rejected of men; his visage is so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men;" accompany him in the concluding scene of

his humiliation, his hands are tortured with the nails, his side pierced with the spear, his head crowned with the thorns, his soul within him melted by the fervor of his Father's wrath, and poured out like water. Were the stars which sparkle in the heavens to be suddenly shrouded with darkness, or the noon day sun to sink in midnight gloom, the spectacle would be awful and affecting; but ten thousand times more awful, more affecting is the history of Messiah's sufferings; the essential glory of God, the express image of his person, is "made of no reputation," becomes "a man of sorrow," and "bows in agony his guiltless head." Beloved hearers, what are the emotions of your hearts amidst these considerations? Does this display, this matchless display of love on his part, deserve no return on your part? can you contemplate, unmoved, unmelted, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich? Was all this reproach, this suffering undergone to reconcile you to God, and yet will you refuse to be reconciled? Was all this endured to make provision for your recovery from wrath, and yet will you reject this provision? Did the eternal Son give, "not calves of a year old, not thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil," but HIMSELF to redeem you from destruction? and yet will you spurn this redemption when brought near? Did pure com-

passion to your souls constrain the Lord of life to humiliation so deep, to anguish so exquisite? and yet will you have no compassion on your own souls? Hear the language of one who ran far the career of impiety; who thought that he must do "many things against Jesus of Nazareth;" who had been, by his own confession, "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious person;" who lifted up with more than ordinary rage the arm of rebellion against the heavens; hear his future language, and and while you hear may Jehovah the Spirit incline and oblige you to imitate his example; the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again."

3. "I would pray you" by the tender mercies, the long-suffering patience of the Holy Ghost, "be ye reconciled to God." As the everlasting Father, moved by the purest love, "laid our help on one that is mighty, and with him is freely offering us all things;" as the Eternal Son, constrained by equal love, voluntarily came and died for our redemption, the co-eternal Spirit, moved by grace equally sovereign and glorious, undertakes to reveal the Lord Jesus and apply "his great salvation. Not by works of righteousness which we have

done, but according to his mercy he saves us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he sheds on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by his grace we might be heirs according to the hope of eternal life." The Spirit is saying to you "come ; he waits to be gracious ; to receive of the things that are Christ's and shew them unto you ; he waits as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation" to enlighten the understanding in the knowledge of Christ, to discover his suitableness to our miseries, his all sufficiency to supply our infinite wants ; he waits as the Spirit of power" to subdue the *iron* will, and incline and enable the sinner to acquiesce in this method of reconciliation ; " he waits as the Spirit of repentance" to soften the flinty heart, and dispose it to look on Jesus whom we have pierced mourning for him ; he waits as the COMFORTER to give peace to the conscience, and consolation to the heart through the atoning sacrifice of Calvary ; " he waits" as the " Spirit of adoption" to witness with our spirits " that we are the sons of God ;" to diffuse over the soul some satisfying assurance of the Father's love, some blessed foretastes of his everlasting enjoyment. Thus all the joy and peace which are experienced in believing ; all that composure, that transport which arise from the " love of God shed abroad through the heart," and the prospect of future glory in his presence,

flow from the inhabitation and influences of the Holy Ghost. This divine agent dwells in the heart, and, by his sanctifying, sealing operations, gives the earnest of their "inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his own glory."—Now, brethren, is there any thing endearing in his undertaking and offices as the **APPLIER** of our gospel salvation? is there any thing delightful in the communion of his love? is there any thing desirable in that glory for which he qualifies, and to which he will infallibly bring the subjects of his grace? "we pray you" by these considerations, "be ye reconciled to God." Does the Holy Ghost Jehovah, Equal with the Father and the Son, thus "wait to be gracious?" is he standing in the promises of the gospel and inviting you to "the marriage of the Lamb? is he affectionately expostulating, "let him that is athirst come: Whoever will let him take of the water of life freely," and yet will you by your indolence and unbelief resist his kindly entreaties? Will any of you prefer the death of corruption to that spiritual life; the darkness of your natural state to that immortal day; the chains of your captivity, to that "glorious liberty" which **HE** imparts? At the peril of eternal damnation, "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom alone ye can be sealed to the day of redemption."

4. I pray you by the value, the inconceivable value of your immortal souls, "be

ye reconciled to God. The redemption of the soul is precious," unutterably "precious;" compared with this every thing earthly; all that the world can boast of pleasure, or profit, or preferment is lighter than vanity; it is less when placed in competition with the vast interests of an immortal spirit, than a single particle of sand compared with the massy globe of the earth, or a single drop of water compared with the measureless ocean. Suppose that the great God should offer thee in the present life uninterrupted ease and enjoyment; suppose that he tendered thee every temporal blessing which thy tongue could mention, or thine imagination paint, health of body, quietude of mind, affluence of fortune, esteem among thy friends; suppose that these privileges were secured to thee during the lapse of an age, or ten thousand, thousand, thousand ages, wouldst thou accept this offer at the loss of thy soul? or couldst thou be a gainer in the exchange? Nay, I should rather ask, wouldst thou not be an *infinite*, *infinite* loser? Can any advantages for a limited time be put in the balance with the *damnation of hell*, damnation that shall never, never end? Can temporal pleasure be considered as a compensation for eternal pain? can outward ease or honor in this world compensate for endless confusion and horror in the next? Hear the language of him who knows the worth of a human soul and of the world: who created both, and is

therefore best acquainted with their comparative value; "what is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" By the worth of thy precious soul "I pray you, be ye reconciled to God." Is not this consideration sufficient to constrain you immediately to acquiesce with the offered reconciliation? Will you court the present life, which is *all vanity and vexation*? which neither affords complete happiness while it lasts, nor has security for continuance another hour: will you be so deluded, so lost to common sense, so blind to your real interests, so cruel to your better part, as to barter all that is dignified, all that is desirable through eternity, for these short, uncertain, unsatisfying joys?

5. "I pray you" by the dread realities, the awful solemnities of a judgment to come, "be ye reconciled to God. It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment." HE, whose counsel shall stand, who will execute all his pleasure, HE "hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that MAN whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." All the living, all the dead, all that shall hereafter exist must appear at one tribunal and be publicly, and solemnly adjudged to an unchanging destination. Hark, "the trump of God" is blown, "the dead are raised, the

great white throne" appears, the judge descends, the nations are gathered to his bar. Methinks, I see the damned throng on the left hand of the judge; what blackness gathers on every countenance! what trembling seizes every knee! hell, already kindled by an accusing conscience, melts their inmost spirits; one reprobates that ease which he indulged at the expence of never ending pain; another exclaims, "O! that I had never been born, that the womb had been my grave, and that I had never seen the sun;" a third wildly damns that wealth which he had sought to the neglect of eternal glory; another curses those companions who laughed him out of his soul and salvation; another wishfully looks up to the rocks to fall upon him and grind him to powder, or conceal him from the face of the Lamb; another tremblingly expostulates, "would to God that the door of mercy was open a little longer, or that the offers of reconciliation were once more repeated."— But the patience of God insulted, exhausted by their former neglect "now laughs at their calamity and mocks when their fear cometh." All this dismay, all this horror is heightened by a voice from the throne, "DEPART FROM ME, YE CURSED, INTO EVERLASTING FIRE: My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed; my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall

cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit :” holy angels then hurry them down to hell and close upon them the doors of the bottomless pit, while all the righteous, ransomed by the blood of the Lamb, and shining in the beauties of holiness, ascend “to be for ever with the Lord. The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”—Brethren, is there a judgment to come? has God proclaimed it? does conscience within frequently forebode it? “I pray you” by all the terrors, and all the glories of that event, “be ye reconciled to God.”

“O ye sinners, now give glory
 To the great Eternal Three ;
 While such dangers lie before you,
 Can you unconcerned be ?
 Judgment hastens, judgment hastens, judgment hastens,
 Mercy, mercy now implore.”

By what other considerations shall I make my appeal to your consciences or your hearts, to your fears or your hopes? Shall I attempt painting the glories of the heavenly world, of that blessed region where there “shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither any more pain;” where they shall see God *face to face*, and be eternally satisfied with the joys of his salvation? Or shall I turn your eyes to the more dreary abodes of damnation, where despair spreads her gloomy reign? where the inhabitants have “no rest day nor night, but drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is pour-

ed out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and are tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb :” shall I attempt describing the glories of the one, or the miseries of the other, and by these considerations “pray you to be reconciled to God?” But, alas, you have been so often admonished and exhorted ; you have been so frequently urged by arguments drawn from the justice of Jehovah, who will “by no means clear the guilty ;” from the utter uncertainty of life ; from the miseries which await the finally impenitent, the exquisite-ness and eternity of their miseries, that I know not what circumstance of terror might be a probable means of alarming your fears : you have been so often entreated “by the mercy of God, who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked ;” by the salvation of Jesus, which is infinitely free, and eternally sufficient ; by tenderness to your own souls, which are so deeply interested, that I know not what circumstance of consolation might prove effectual for exciting your hopes and encouraging you “to come in.” But HE, “whose we are, and whom we serve,” has commanded us to “exhort with all long suffering and doctrine ;” to go out “into the streets and lanes of the city,” and proclaim aloud, YET THERE IS ROOM, “the table of the gospel is not completely filled up,” and “compel them to come in that my house may be filled :” Our consciences also bear

us witness that such is our pity to your souls, and concern for their everlasting welfare, we willingly embrace any opportunity and employ any argument while there remains a *peradventure* that you will hear. "I pray you," therefore, by all those monuments of divine mercy which have appeared in different ages of the world, "be ye reconciled to God." Has not the grace of God displayed her sovereignty, her exceeding riches in the salvation of sinners *even the chief*? in dispensing her pardons to the most criminal? in adorning with the beauties of holiness the most foul? in subduing to *the obedience of faith* the most obstinate, the most incorrigible of the human kind? in raising to the highest mansions in glory those, who, by every species of abomination, were once debased to the very suburbs of hell? Could we draw aside the veil, and cast our eyes within the walls of the Jerusalem above, we might behold thousands seated high in bliss, shining "as stars and suns in our Father's kingdom," whose names were once loaded with crimes the most reproachful and abominable: Hast thou been a murderer? Such was Manasseh; he caused the streets of Jerusalem to flow with innocent blood; "but he obtained mercy:" Hast thou been dishonest? hast thou either secretly or openly defrauded others of their due? Such was the thief on the cross; "but he obtained mercy." Hast thou been impure, devoted to the low gratifications of the flesh?

Such was Mary Magdalene ; “ but she obtained mercy.” Hast thou been “ a blasphemer, a persecutor, an injurious person ? ” has thou employed thy time, and talents, in reviling the name of Jesus, or scoffing at the professors of his religion ? Such was Saul of Tarsus ; “ but he obtained mercy.” Hast thou been a fornicator, an idolater, an adulterer, a drunkard, an extortioner ? Such were some of the Corinthians ; “ but they obtained mercy : ” Hast thou long prostituted a godly education, despised the entreaties of parents, quenched the emotions of the Spirit, broken the most solemn resolutions of amendment ? Such was a Gardiner ; but “ he obtained mercy.” All these, however foul in themselves, however debased by the number and the enormity of their transgressions, “ are washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” All these have entered into the covenant, and “ yet, sinner, there is room ” for thine admission. All these obtained peace to their consciences, and reconciliation with God, by the blood of the cross, and yet it flows, freely flows for thy redemption. By all these numerous, these illustrious monuments of mercy, “ I pray you in Christ’s stead be ye reconciled to God.” Have millions of your nature, of your character “ been compelled to come in ? ” have they become partakers of the Lord Jesus with eternal glory ? I ask you by all that is terrible in the majesty of

God, by all that is valuable in that soul which was created after his image, "why will you die?" Why will you "judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life" by indolently or obstinately continuing in sin? Are not the compassions of God, the offices of Jesus, the consolations of the Spirit, the promises of the word, the same that they formerly were? Is not the path to glory, through the rent veil of Immanuel's flesh, as open now, as in the days of Manasseh or of Paul? "why then will you die?" Does not a merciful God as fervently expostulate, "turn ye at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you? Why therefore will you die?" Are not you as susceptible of glory or shame, of happiness in the communion of God, or torment under the displays of his justice as others who have complied? "why then will you die?"

Such is the embassy, brethren dearly beloved, with which we are intrusted by the living God; we are commissioned to go forth to sinners of the human family; to announce that that Sovereign whom they had offended, against whom they had raised the arm of rebellion, is now reconciled through the interposition of the Eternal Son; to declare that all things are ready on the part of heaven; that the King of kings has no pleasure in your death, your everlasting destruction, in executing upon you the punishment threatened against your crimes,

but would rather that you "return and live;" that your immediate reconciliation is perfectly consistent with the honors of his law; nay, that it will reflect eternal glory on each part of the divine government. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, let him turn to the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon him."

According to the ability which is given me of the Lord, I have endeavored this day to fulfil my commission; I have appeared "as an ambassador for Christ," although infinitely unworthy and insufficient for a station so important, and as "though God did beseech you, I have prayed you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Various arguments have been employed, calculated both to urge and encourage you to accept the offered reconciliation, and thus conclude a treaty of peace. Now, brethren, it remains to know the issue of this embassy; what return shall I make to that Lord God who appointed me to intercede with you upon this occasion, and compel you to come in?" Must I retire this evening to my closet, and reply, "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded; I appeared as thine ambassador, and in thy name offered them a complete pardon for their past offences; I endeavored to give them the most satisfactory and affecting proofs of thy *good will* to our apostate world; that, rather than they should perish

eternally, thou didst appoint thine own Son to suffer in their room, and to expiate their guilt with his most precious blood; that now the glories of each divine Person, of each divine perfection are fully secured, nay, eminently advanced in their restoration to friendship; I attempted, with all possible plainness and earnestness, to exhibit life and death, the blessing and the curse before them, by shewing that those who bowed to thy sceptre of grace should be immediately received into thy favor, and be eternally blessed in thy communion, while those who obstinately continue in their rebellion will be crushed by the arm of thy justice, and that to all eternity: I argued with them; I expostulated with them by every consideration which imagination could conceive, and with all patience, being willing to endure any toil; to submit to any reproach or persecution, could I only have succeeded in negotiating a peace by bringing them to a reception of thy Son: But, Lord, I mention it with humiliation, with grief, with inexpressible anguish of spirit, that "they would have none of thy reproof;" so deep, so damnable is their delusion that they will scarcely listen to thine invitation, or if they do hearken for a time, they afterwards depart apparently as careless as ever, equally regardless of thy favor or thy frowns, the smiles of thy countenance or the lightnings of thy wrath; one is "gone to his farm or his merchandise," as if this gain could profit

him at the expence of his soul; as "if his gold or his silver would be able to deliver him in the day of the Lord's wrath;" another appears utterly secure and indifferent; he is asking "a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep," as if this momentary ease could profit him at the hazard of never-ending confusion and pain. Now, Lord, thou hast created all things, rational and irrational, for advancing the glory of thy perfections; thou art the wise, the righteous and uncontrolable Disposer of all; "none is able to stay thy hand," to resist thine operations, or dare "challenge, what doest thou?" I resign them wholly to thine adorable sovereignty; I must acknowledge that thou wouldst be just in suspending any farther treaty, in calling home thy messengers of peace, and "swearing in thy wrath that henceforth they shall not enter into thy rest. —But who is a God like unto thee that pardonest iniquity?" Is not judgment thy strange work? art thou not rather exalted shewing mercy? do not the honors of thy grace brighten in proportion to the worthlessness, and wretchedness, and obstinacy of the sinner reclaimed? I pray thee, therefore, to spare them in thy divine forbearance a little longer, and grant another opportunity of reproving and exhorting if *peradventure* they will hear. I adore thy goodness in offering reconciliation at a price so amazing as the sacrifice of thine own Son; I admire

thy long suffering in importuning with sinners of the human family from year to year when thou canst not be profited by our obedience; "but thou art God and not man and thy ways, therefore, are not as our ways;" in thy name I will again address them, but if they continue careless and obstinate I know that their ruin is unavoidable and that their misery through eternity will be increased in proportion to all the earnestness with which thy messengers have entreated them in time; I know Lord, that thou art bound by thy word, thine oath, by all the glories of thy throne, "to pour upon the incorrigible rebel the fury of thine anger and the strength of battle," and thy servants must lift up their HALLELUJAH, acknowledging, "righteous art thou, Lord, in the judgments which thou art executing." Brethren, must I return with such a message to him who hath appointed me to this ministry? *My lips quiver, trembling seizes my bones,* and my heart within me melts at the very thought; my feeble frame cannot bear the impression that any of you should be *anathema, maranatha*, accursed at the appearance of Christ, or be doomed to "suffer the vengeance of eternal fire;" I rather entertain the pleasing hope that you will "yet consider your ways," and therefore add the following directions which may tend to your spiritual advantage.

1. Be persuaded that the Lord God entertains designs of mercy towards you; that

he is not willing that any of you should perish, but that all should come to repentance." What other or higher proofs of good will on his part could you possibly conceive than are actually afforded in scripture? "Through his tender mercies, the day spring from on high hath visited our world;" his own Son "is set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, that he may be just, and yet justify the ungodly who believes."— Does he not pledge his word again and again; has he not sanctioned it with the greater solemnity of an oath, to remove every possible doubt, "that he has no pleasure in your death," but wishes you "to return and live?" Does he not pursue you in your soul-destroying career, and expostulate, "O my people, what have I done unto thee, wherein have I wearied thee, testify against me?" Does not his Spirit appear *grieved*, melted within him, humanly speaking, when the sinner becomes altogether incorrigible, when neither judgments nor mercies, admonitions nor entreaties will reclaim? "How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I make thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Does he not ordain men of your own family, "of like passions" with yourselves to stand forth as ambassadors and treat in his name, "praying you to be reconciled?" Does he not instantly behold, does he not fondly cherish

the first meltings of the sinner's heart, his first inclination to return? "Surely I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; I heard him;" his ears are open to the first penitential cries, and joy overflows his heart. he beholds the prodigal as soon "as he comes to himself;" he runs to meet him, "when he is yet a great way off; he falls on his neck and kisses him;" he invites angels to mingle their exultations at the return of the alien to his Father's house. "There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Meditate on these considerations, on all the pains which the great God has taken for our salvation, on all the expressions of love which he has afforded, and try to be persuaded that he really "waits to be gracious to you, that he is really exalted, glorified in shewing mercy, and that judgment is his strange work;" having pondered these things over and over, cast yourselves on his mercy; resolve *there* and only *there* to be found living and dying. "One shall say I am the Lord's; they shall join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."

2. Reflect that "nothing, nothing" can possibly be gained by persevering in your present enmity and maintaining the warfare; but all that is valuable both in time and eternity must necessarily be forfeited. Can "any harden themselves against" God, and reasonably expect "to prosper?" Or can

fading, feeble flesh keep the field “when the Lord of hosts mustereth the hosts of the battle?” How full of grandeur, how full of terror is his challenge uttered by the prophet! “Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them up together; all the rage which can be manifested,” as if he had said, “and all the opposition which can be made by mortals, by ten thousand worlds, is only fit fuel for the fire of my indignation. For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” No present advantages, no energy of body, no fortitude of spirit, no affluence of fortune, no dignity of station can possibly secure in the hour of his wrath. He touches the strongest arm and it is instantly unnerved; one flash of the lightning of his fury cleaves the stoutest, the most impenetrable spirit; the mere “breath of the blast of his nostril” sweeps the monarch from the height of his throne to the depth of perdition. Behold the dread confusion, hear the wild uproar of his enemies when the Lord of hosts cometh forth to judge the nations. “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man and every free man hid themselves in the dens and in the

rocks of the mountains: and said to the mountains and rocks fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" O brethren, be entreated to throw down the weapons of your rebellion in time: "acquaint now yourselves with God and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto you: Seek ye him and ye shall live; seek him who maketh the seven stars and Orion; who turneth the shadow of death into the morning; the Lord is his name."

3. Let no time be lost in postponing the infinitely important work of salvation. A forbearing God has long been dealing with you by his servants; he has often proposed the overtures of reconciliation; but if you persist in your unbelief and opposition, these may be shortly suspended; all intercourse by his word, his Spirit, his ambassadors may speedily be closed, and the Lord God "swear in his wrath that ye shall not enter into his rest." Remember that the scriptures mention "an accepted time, a day of salvation," obviously insinuating that there is a period beyond which the sinner shall not be heard, and admission into glory shall be sought in vain. We are commanded to seek the Lord while he may be found, to call upon him while he is near," forewarning us that the hour is coming when he will depart, never, never to be reconciled more.

Witness the judgment of God against the Israelites who obstinately transgressed in the wilderness. "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, it is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways; unto whom I swear in my wrath that they shall not enter into my rest." Witness also his judgment against the rich man who was resolving to take his *ease*, to *eat*, to *drink*, to *be merry*, from the confidence of having "much goods laid up for many years. God said unto him thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required." Witness again the curse denounced against the fig tree which remained barren under the means of cultivation, "behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Behold, again, the fearful disappointment and doom of the foolish virgins, related in the parable; "they afterwards came, saying Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not." All these monuments of vengeance are exhibited for your admonition and mine; they are set forth as beacons to prevent us from making shipwreck on the same rock. "Choose you," therefore, "this day whom ye will serve. Now, now, now is the accepted time." Thus saith the Holy Ghost, "to-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts;" and as the Lord lives, whatever tempts you to wait until another day, or hour,

comes from the inspiration of "your father the devil." Is there any thing real in religion? "give all diligence to make thy calling and election sure:" Is it true that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners?" take no sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye lids, until "he be formed in thy heart the hope of glory:" Is there a particular day of salvation? "strive" mightily "to enter in, before the decree break forth and this day pass as the chaff:" Hast thou a soul to be saved or damned? let its interests claim thine earliest, thy most earnest attention: Is it to thee unknown but thy soul may this night be required? surely it is madness in the extreme to delay another moment: Arise from thy slumbers; act the part of a rational being; hasten to the city of refuge "before the Lord's anger come upon thee," and the voice of mercy be hushed for ever. As the Saviour "wept over Jerusalem," over her infatuation, her obstinacy, I cannot refrain from weeping at the thought that this message should be misimproved by a single hearer or reader. "But if ye will not hear, and will not lay it to heart to give glory to his name," the Lord God of gods judge between you and me that I have delivered my own soul: if one of you continues in unbelief and finally perishes, the conscience of that one is witness; if two, if ten, if twenty of you continue in unbelief and are finally damned, the consciences of those two, or ten, or twenty are

witnesses against each other that I am free from their blood; I demand that hereafter, when "the heavens shall pass away like a scroll," when "the last trumpet shall sound," when the Judge shall appear, when the nations shall assemble, when all the unbelieving shall stand pale, self-condemned, God-condemned, on his left hand, you publicly exculpate me from being chargeable with your damnation; when "in hell you lift up your eyes in torment and behold the redeemed afar off," your parents, it may be, your brethren, your sisters, the companions of your youth, who sat under the same means, recall to mind this occasion, when I forewarned you of those torments, and "prayed you to be reconciled to God:"—Myriads of ages hereafter, when *the worm*, an accusing conscience, still lives to torture, and the flames still roll around thee with augmenting fury, recollect that this day, in this town, in this sanctuary, in this pulpit, from this passage, *I prayed* you with all the affection of a brother, I prayed you with tears *to be reconciled unto God.* AMEN.

SERMON VI.

ROMANS, XVI. 7.

Who also were in Christ before me.

THERE is no disposition of mind by which the real followers of the Lamb are more uniformly distinguished than unfeigned humility. They are willing upon all occasions and with all cheerfulness to commend what is excellent in others, and to acknowledge their own imperfections and insignificance. They will aim, when influenced by the Spirit of their lowly Master, at "doing nothing through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind each will esteem another better than himself." This humility and self denial of temper eminently adorned the great apostle of the Gentiles. Does he contemplate his former character as a sinner? he appears to labor for language to express his self-loathing and abhorrence. "I was a blasphemer, and persecutor, but I obtained mercy, that in me first* Jesus Christ

* The word here translated *first*, is the same which was rendered *chief* in the preceding verse, and perhaps the former translation expresses more correctly the apostle's intention. He evidently designs not so much to express the order of time when he was savingly converted, as to expose the enormity of his own character before called by divine grace; he intends to represent himself as a *chief* sinner, as a transgressor who stood *first*, *highest* in degree, as *pre-eminent* in impiety: thus he would magnify the riches of that grace which abounded in his pardon, and encourage others who might afterwards incline to receive Christ for salvation.

might shew forth all long suffering as a pattern to them that should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." While he contemplates his present attainments as a christian and an apostle, he pronounces himself more weak, more worthless and contemptible than any; not only as "the least," but even "less than the least of all saints, and not worthy to be called an apostle. To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Such was obviously the reigning temper of his mind when he indited the passage which is designed as the subject of our present reflections: He sends his salutation, his affectionate respects, his unfeigned wishes for all prosperity, "to Andronicus and Junia, who," he adds, are "of note among the apostles," virtually acknowledging that they far outshone him in their personal attainments and their services to the church; "but," as if he had said, "their greatest superiority over me, their distinguishing glory is this, "they were also in Christ before me;" they were *in Christ*, united to his glorious person, and thus interested in the riches of his salvation, while I was "a stranger and foreigner," ladened with all the guilt, and debased with all the pollutions of my natural state; "they were in Christ," enjoying "the glorious liberty of his children," and favored with the endearments of his fellowship, while I remained the slave of un-

mortified lust, and deluded by the artifices of the arch adversary of souls." He considers it as his unspeakable loss and reproach, that he had so obstinately resisted the grace of Jesus, and remained so long a stranger to the joys of his salvation.

The expression, "being in Christ," is frequently used by this apostle and other inspired writers. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; Ye are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works." There is an outward, visible relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the privilege of all who profess his religion, and manifest a public attachment to his cause in the world: this is the situation of all who have been baptized in his name, and have not renounced their baptism by open infidelity, and an utter denial of his religion. To this outward, visible relation the Redeemer alludes in the following passage, "every branch in me," by external profession and dedication, "that beareth not fruit he taketh away."—Even this union to the Son of God is attended with numerous and singular advantages: The person is thereby introduced into the communion of the visible church, obtains an interest in the prayers of the righteous, and is favored with the means of salvation.—They enjoy every outward advantage, the admonitions of the law, the entreaties of the gospel, and the ordinary operations of the Spirit, in common with those who are effectually and savingly called. But this rela-

tion, however intimate and interesting, falls infinitely short of the union mentioned in our text. This consists in being "joined to the Lord Christ" as really as the branch is ingrafted into the vine, or as the members of the human body are united to the head.— "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him: We being many are one body in Christ, and every one members of another." This union of the sinner to the Saviour, is effected by the Spirit of the living God, and is accomplished in his effectual calling. The children of adoption are therefore represented as "born of the Spirit, as saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." This all-gracious, all-mighty Agent makes his entrance into their hearts with all their abominations, raises them up to spiritual life, and produces that faith by which they apprehend the Lord Christ, and apply him as their only portion. The very moment that the soul is thus powerfully apprehended by the Spirit, and enabled by faith to apprehend the Saviour, a foundation is laid and a title secured for all the privileges of grace and glory. So real, so intimate is this relation, that whatever belonged formerly to Christ belongs hereafter to them; that whatever was done by Him, as their representing Head, is considered as done by them his mystical members. The soul, in consequence of this union, as really derives all spiritual support, its life, light, strength and

consolation from Jesus the EVER LIVING HEAD, as the natural branches derive their influence and nourishment from the tree upon which they grow. "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing." The believer, thus joined to the Lord, becomes as fully interested in all his mediatorial blessings, as the wife by the marriage contract becomes interested in the property of her husband; his righteousness becomes *theirs* for reconciliation; with this, as with an immaculate robe, they are adorned, and introduced into the presence of the Eternal King; his promises become *theirs*, their charter, their written security for every spiritual and immortal blessing; his covenant also is *theirs*, their repository in which all their treasures are laid up, and from which they are warranted to receive for the supply of their largest desires; his angels are, in a certain sense, *theirs*, become subservient to their consolation and safety: "They are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them as heirs of salvation;" and, what is their crowning felicity and glory, "his Father is their Father, and his God their God." Such are the privileges, the exalted privileges of all who are savingly united to the adorable Jesus. "All things are theirs; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs; because they are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Without detaining you longer by attempting to explain the nature of our union to the Son of God, or the benefits which necessarily accompany this relation, we proceed to consider the advantages of being *early* in Christ. There is no necessity for proving that early piety is recommended in this part of the verse. After its inspired author had noticed *Andronicus and Junia* as eminent among the apostles, he concludes his remarks concerning them by adding, with peculiar emphasis, and apparent humiliation and grief, "who were also in Christ before me."

Bear with me while I declare that I feel inexpressible anxiety, nay, anguish of spirit, respecting the success of this message on the souls of the young: I am persuaded that as the truth of the living God, however feebly delivered, or unworthy the instrument, "it shall not return unto him void;" it cannot fail to have a most solemn tendency upon every youth who may have opportunity of perusing it; if it is not instrumental in awakening them from their lethargy, and leading them to serious reflection, it must tend to harden them in sin, and prepare for a more untimely and awful visitation. "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." With this very imperfect attempt to instruct or persuade I can only mingle my most fervent prayers, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give them

the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened that they may know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance among the saints."

1. Early acquaintance with our Lord Jesus Christ, early union to his person is desirable, because thereby you are fitted for glorifying God, and answering the end of your creation. This argument for enforcing early religion is mentioned *first*, because it is like an appeal to the generosity of the young, and must, in some measure, impress them, unless doubly "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Pause a moment, beloved youth, and reason with thyself in the following manner; "who is the original author of my existence? Who formed this body so admirably curious in all its parts; the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the tongue, the hands, the feet? While other animals are naturally prone towards the ground, as a proof that they were destined for meaner pursuits, who formed this body erect, this countenance directed towards the heavens, shewing that I was designed for nobler employments? Who formed my rational and immortal spirit? who endowed it with various faculties so far exalted above the merely animal world, and capable of endless advances in knowledge? Who preserved me in the helpless period of infancy, when I was incapable of speaking or think-

ing or acting? who guarded me in the hour of danger, and supported me in the hour of distress? When many of my own age and associates are gone to the *land of silence*, and mingled with their mean original, some of them perhaps without any forethought on that eternity into which they were plunging, who has sustained my soul in life, and is yet continuing the offers of mercy?" Reason with thyself in this manner, and then say, does not every principle of generosity, of gratitude call upon thee to love a Benefactor so liberal? "to remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth?" Were the members of thy body *formed to shew forth thy Maker's praise?* and yet shall they be debased as "instruments of unrighteousness to sin?" Were the powers of thy soul created after his image, and designed for contemplating his perfections, for tracing them as they shine in the works of creation and redemption? and yet shall they be lost upon the vanities of the world? "Do you thus requite the Lord? O foolish people and unwise! Is he not thy Father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee and established thee?" Do you feel no inward meltings of heart? does not the penitential tear roll insensibly from thine eye when a Benefactor so kind utters the complaint? "I have nourished and brought them up as children, but they have rebelled against me; the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people

doth not consider." The great God seemingly turns away disappointed from his own creation, and "repents that he made man upon the earth."

2. Early acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ, early union to his Person is desirable, because thereby he is delighted, "he sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied." It is evident, from innumerable passages of scripture, that the sooner you come to Christ the better; he will be the more pleased and honored: How frequently does he overlook the wise, the mighty, the honorable, and solicit the attention of the young! "My son give me thine heart: Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth? Hear me now, therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth." Will this consideration have no influence in determining you "to seek the Lord God of your fathers?" What has the compassionate Saviour done and suffered for promoting your happiness? Has he not contributed more for securing your welfare, than your parents, your dearest friends, than all the men on earth, and all the angels in heaven could have done through eternity? He endured the most painful sufferings in his life, and at last died the accursed death of the cross to be a "propitiation for your sins; he blotted out," with his own blood, "the band writing that stood against you, and opened a new and living way into the holiest

of all." Is it nothing to you that the Lord of glory was thus humbled? that the Prince of life became obedient even unto death in your behalf? Is there nothing moving, nothing constraining in love so free, so immensely great? Can you survey the variety of his sufferings, the anguish of his spirit in the garden, and on the tree? and yet feel no obligation to this suffering, redeeming Lord? Will you, my young friends, "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame," by trampling on that blood which he poured forth for your redemption? Did he not endure enough from the malice of men, from the rage of devils, from the wrath of his righteous Father? must you inflict a still deeper wound by endeavoring to "make his cross of no effect" through your unbelief? He frequently and earnestly entreats you to hear his voice, and I appeal to all that is manly, to all that is dignified in your nature, is he not worthy of your first love? The period of youth is the meridian of human life, the body and mind are then in their vigor, in their glory, and most capable of exertion; would it not therefore, be ungrateful, ignoble in the extreme, to offer, "this period" as a sacrifice to "the devil, the world and the flesh," and afterwards come with the wrinkled face, a broken constitution and languishing spirits *as an offering* to Jehovah your Redeemer?

3. Early acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ, early union to his person is de-

airable, because thereby your own happiness is unspeakably promoted. They are strangers to solid peace, to rational and substantial joy, who have never beheld the glory of Jesus, nor experienced the fellowship of his love. This is not a matter merely of speculation; it is not the assertion barely of those who minister at the altar, and whose interest it may appear to propagate these sentiments; it is the testimony of the living God, who will not deceive *you*, who *himself* cannot be deceived; who created the immortal soul, and therefore knows perfectly wherein its true interest, and honor, and happiness consist. Hear his judgment declared in language which cannot be misunderstood. "Wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it: For whoso findeth me findeth life, but he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death." This is the testimony of thousands and thousands in all periods and in all situations of human life; of those who had access to all the pleasures, and attained to the highest honors which the world could afford: their happiest moments beyond comparison were those which they spent in conversing with their God, agreeably lost in the admiration of his excellencies, and enjoying the assurance of his love. One, high on the seat of human honor, and basking beneath the sunshine of prosperity, solemnly attests, "thou hast put gladness in

my heart more than in the time that their corn and wine increased; a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Another as confidently asserts, "whom having not seen we love, and in whom, although we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Let us hear the testimony of one who lived in our own age, and has lately exchanged the joys of the earthly, for the brighter glories of the heavenly sanctuary. "Little as I am acquainted with the Lord, I leave it as my dying testimony that there is none like Christ; there is nothing like fellowship with Christ. I dare aver before God, and angels, and men, that I would not exchange the pleasures of religion which I have enjoyed, especially in the days of my youth, for all the pleasures and profits and honors of this world, since the creation till this present time, ten thousand times told. Had I ten thousand worlds in my offer, and these secured to me for ever, they would be utterly rejected. Doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, and do count them but dung to win him."* Such is the testimony of the righteous with respect to the pleasures of religion; and can the generation of the ungodly boast of joys thus refined and satisfying? Have the tribe of drunkards, of infidels, of atheists found a retreat thus secure, pleasures thus elevated in all the

* Brown's Posthumous works, p. 140.

haunts of iniquity? Nay, have they not experienced in life; have not many of them acknowledged with unutterable agony in their dying hours, "that all is vanity and vexation of spirit?"

4. Early acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ, early union to his person is desirable, because thereby you are kept from the grosser pollutions of the world; those pollutions into which the "election of grace," before their conversion, have often been plunged to the dishonor of God, and their own bitter remorse and humiliation. For this reason, they are doubly honored, they are doubly blessed whom the Holy Ghost sanctifies in early life, and preserves from the follies which are common in that age. Often, often have the children of the kingdom gone with dejected hearts, and confusion of face, while they lived, on account of their youthful impieties: The recollection of these has not only ruffled the calm of old age, but has thrown a deep shade over their spirits in a departing hour. This consideration tends also to lessen their confidence in reproving impiety in others, or at least takes off the edge of reproof when administered. How melancholy was the recollection which Ephraim entertained of his youthful follies after he had been brought to a consideration of his ways! "Surely after that I was turned I repented, and after that I was instructed I smote upon my thigh, as a mark of indignation against myself: although I had

obtained mercy of the Lord, I was ready to become my own executioner, and take vengeance on myself ;” *I was ashamed*, “ I could not look up with confidence to that God against whom the offence was committed ; I had not freedom to associate with the righteous whom I had grieved ; I could not with suitable boldness reprove the ungodly whom my impious conduct had hardened in transgression ; *yea even confounded*, “ I was filled with amazement at the infatuation, at the very madness of my former conduct : I became, in some measure, *a terror to myself*, if not to others ;” because I did bear the reproach of my youth ;” each recollection of his youthful vanities was a new source of humiliation and shame. With these we may compare the exercises of the patriarch Job. “ Wherefore hidest thou thy face, or holdest me for an enemy ? for thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.” He appears to consider all the afflictions, all the disappointments which he experienced, whether temporal or spiritual, as the chastisement of a righteous Father for his youthful wantonness and impiety.

5. Early acquaintance with our Lord Jesus Christ, early union to his person is desirable, because we thus enjoy a greater opportunity of serving our Redeemer, and our generation in the world. The sooner we proceed to business in the morning, the more we are able to accomplish during the

day ; he who goes out to his employment at the hour of four, or five, or six, can perform more business, and to better purpose, than he who lingers until nine, or ten, or eleven.—Upon the same principle, they who *early* devote themselves to the Son of God, and enter into his service, have opportunity of doing more for their Creator, their Redeemer, and their generation, than those who waste the morning of life in the vanities of the world. It was this consideration which peculiarly afflicted and melted the soul of the great apostle. His spirit was seemingly overwhelmed with sorrow, and his cheeks bathed in tears while he mentions “Andronicus and Junia” who had been “in Christ before him.” Methinks I hear this holy man indulging himself in these plaintive reflections: “These favored youth were enlisted under the banner of Jesus, and advancing his interests in the world, while I was not only resisting his Spirit, but openly doing many things in opposition to the progress of his gospel: While I was blaspheming his sacred name, “making havock of the church, hailing men and women, compelling them to blaspheme,” these were employed in adoring his love, and preaching repentance and reconciliation through his cross; while they, by the meekness of their conversation, and the excellence of their example, were silencing the enemies of religion, edifying and emboldening the disciples of the Lord, I with more than or-

dinary rage was persecuting his followers, grieving their righteous souls, and leading others to everlasting ruin ; while they, by a humble dependance on the Saviour's merits, and a manly zeal for his honor, were "working out for themselves an exceeding and eternal weight of glory," I, had not free, almighty grace interposed, was "treasuring up for myself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." O the depth of his condescension and sovereignty, that at this advanced hour of the day, he should admit me into his vineyard, and acknowledge me as the least, the most unworthy of his servants." Even after the apostle, through the abounding riches of divine grace, had obtained forgiveness from God, he never could obtain pardon from himself—Therefore, in the account which he gives of himself to the Corinthian church, he declares, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Will this consideration have no influence in constraining you to employ the morning of your days in the service of Christ Jesus the Lord? Are you not obligated by every dictate of reason and revelation ; by all your privileges, all your prospects as men and as christians, to offer him your bodies and spirits *as a living sacrifice*, to give him the earliest affection of your hearts, the undivided service of your lives? Was your duration on earth ten thou-

sand times longer than it is, and your powers for honoring the Redeemer ten thousand times greater, more enlarged than they are, you would still be infinitely, *infinitely* indebted to his condescension and love. Nay, ten thousand angels, amidst the lapse of ten thousand ages, would be unable to pay the debt of *one* ransomed sinner to his redeeming God ; eternity itself, which as far exceeds the period now mentioned as the boundless ocean exceeds a single drop, or as the globe of the earth exceeds one particle of dust, this eternity itself will be short enough to spend in his service and shew forth his praise ; and yet can you hesitate about offering him this short, uncertain, miserable life ? Were it possible for grief to enter the “ spirits of the just made perfect in heaven,” they must grieve that they had been *so long* unacquainted with Jesus, that they had done *so little* for him upon earth ; were it possible for Manasseh the murderer, for the thief who died on the cross, or Saul of Tarsus, who had “ long breathed out threatenings against the church,” to address you from their mansions in glory, they would call upon you, NOT TO SLEEP AS DO OTHERS ; they would exhort you, TO SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNES ; TO REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF YOUR YOUTH ;

6. There is another consideration by which I would urge you to aspire after piety in your youth, and which I am obliged to

mention with a degree of trembling and horror; it is addressed more immediately to your fears, and may the Lord God give it a becoming influence on your hearts; the consideration is this, that in early life you stand the greatest chance, humanly speaking, of seeking religion with success. "To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heavens." There is a particular season of the year when the husbandman must commit his seed to the earth if he rationally expects a crop. This doctrine is perhaps, not more true as it respects the natural, than as it respects the spiritual world. There is a period in human life when the foundation is laid for a blessed immortality, or the work, for the most part remains undone for ever; and this in ordinary cases, is the period* of youth. That

* I have been highly entertained, and I trust, animated in perusing "The Memoirs of Eminently Pious Women," a work lately published in London. The zeal of these holy persons shone illustrious in every walk of life; it roused them to seize every opportunity, and to occupy every talent in doing good, in promoting the salvation of their children, their servants, their poor neighbors, and in diffusing through desolate places the knowledge of salvation. But I mention this work principally with a view of engaging the attention and interesting the hearts of the young. In these memoirs of nearly fifty women, there is, so far as I recollect, scarcely an instance of one being converted after the age of twenty years. They chiefly became acquainted with the Lord Jesus and felt savingly *the power of his resurrection* from the 12th to the 18th year of their age. God forbid that I should be considered as by any means discouraging those who have outlived that period without satisfactory proofs of a saving change. *The stout-hearted and those that are far from righteousness* are explicitly called to the *marriage of the Lamb*. Yet this fact undoubtedly demands the serious consideration of the young: It shows that it is dangerous in the extreme to delay repentance, to suffer the days of youth to pass unimproved. Gradually as

question long since proposed by a "master in Israel, although it proceeded from ignorance in him, contains a very solemn and awful admonition to the young, CAN A MAN BE BORN WHEN HE IS OLD? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may those also do good that are accustomed to do evil." The instances of conversion in advanced life are comparatively rare, and attended with a much severer conflict from the increased strength of corruption. If we deliberately reject a gracious God when we are young, we have little encouragement either from reason or revelation to expect that he will receive us in old age. Although Jehovah the Sanctifier deals with the human heart according to his unsearchable sovereignty, and calls the objects of his love by *whatever* method, and in *whatever* period his sovereignty dictates; yet those, who grow up careless under the means of salvation, are usually permitted to continue in their carelessness; the Lord God, in righteous indignation, "LETS THEM ALONE," leaves them to a spirit of slumber, "lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed;" they are sealed up to final impenitence, the

we advance in years the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire of other things multiply upon us and divert our attention from the one thing needful—Our Redeemer remarked, hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of God: perhaps scripture and observation will justify us in saying, hardly shall they that are old enter the kingdom,

conscience becomes "seared as with a hot iron," and ordinances and providences altogether lose their effect. How awful was the denunciation of God against the nation of Israel! and it is equally alarming to the individual who misimproves his season of mercy. "And I spake unto you rising up early and speaking but ye heard not; and I called but ye answered not; therefore, pray not thou for this people, neither lift up your cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me, for I will not hear thee."

O my young friends, do not your hearts secretly tremble at the very thought of being utterly forsaken of God? of being delivered up "to strong delusions, that ye should believe a lie, that ye all may be damned who believe not the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness?" Can you conceive a being out of hell more *wretched*, more *accursed*, than the person of whom the Holy Ghost has concluded, "he is joined to his idols let him alone? Hear me now, therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth; lest thou give thine honor to others and thy years unto the cruel; and thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me.

These are the advantages of *early* piety, which after much painful inquiry impressed

my mind as the most obvious, and I trust that you are fully convinced both of their reality and importance. Surely there is something dignified, something desirable in fulfilling the end of your creation, in answering the expectations of Him who gave you existence, and is daily crowning you with all the blessings of life ; in obeying the voice of that Jesus who came unasked, undeserved, unexpected, and “ made his soul an offering for your sins ;” in “ laying a good foundation” for usefulness in this world, and immortal blessedness in the next. What is now your serious determination ? Is early acquaintance with Jesus the friend of sinners, an early surrender of yourselves to his service infinitely desirable ? and yet will you be so infatuated as *to halt another hour between two opinions ?* Are Jehovah Jesus, the suffering, bleeding Saviour, “ with glory and honor and immortality” in his hand, and “ the prince of darkness,” this vile apostate from his God, with never ending perdition in his hand, the rivals which contend for your souls ? and yet do you hesitate whose voice you will hear, whose offer you will embrace ? Is it with you a matter of mere indifference whether you inherit the blessing or the curse ? whether you become an eternal inhabitant of heaven or hell ? There is not a holy intelligence throughout the creation of God, not an angel, not a seraph, not a cherub in heaven, not a ransomed spirit in glory, not a ran-

somed spirit in grace, but would pity your delusion, and, if they could weep, would weep over your folly; there is not a fallen spirit in hell but must stand amazed at your madness in misimproving opportunities so precious, in neglecting a salvation so great. What prayers, what tears would they not give for the abatement of their misery a single hour! How ardently did one expostulate, that he might not be "tormented before the time!" that the full execution of the curse might be suspended a little longer! How importunately did another ask even "a drop of water to cool his tongue when tormented in the flames!" And yet when the door of mercy stands open, will you be at no pains to enter in? when eternal glory is in your offer, when it is presented as a gift divinely *free*, through Jesus Christ, are you regardless about accepting it? When your destiny for ever may be depending, as it were, on the improvement of a single hour, will you be asking a "little more sleep, a little more slumber?" There is not a *stork in the heavens*, not a *turtle*, not a *crane*, not a *swallow*, not an *ant*, that creeps on the earth, insignificant as it may appear, but rebukes your insensibility and sloth. These irrational orders of being "know their appointed time;" they "provide their meat in summer," they "gather their food in harvest. Give glory, therefore, to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark

mountains, and while you look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."

But fondly "I hope better things of you," beloved youth, and "things which accompany salvation;" I would therefore mention, for your encouragement, that all *things are ready* on the part of heaven; God the Father is *ready* to adopt you into his family, to acknowledge you as his sons and daughters and make over the inheritance of children. He tenderly entreats, "wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" he graciously promises, "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." God the Son is *ready* to receive you as members of his mystical body, to make over the covenant with its everlasting blessings, to give you complete remission through his atoning sacrifice, and with his divinely perfect righteousness to secure your title to immortal glory. How movingly does he exclaim—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice and open unto me, I will come in and sup with him and he with me." God the Holy Ghost is *ready* to take possession of your hearts, to sanctify you by his grace, and prepare you for future glory: The church of the first born is *ready* to hail your early approach to the Saviour, and acknowledge you as their brethren and sisters in the fellowship of his love; and

will you, whose souls, whose eternal all are at stake, be the only party unwilling? Can you be unconcerned whether you be finally saved or lost? Are you so fond of ease *now*, that you will not take the trouble of serious thought, of examining whether you “are born of the Spirit, of seeking the Lord while he may be found?” and yet can you coolly bear the thought of suffering the vengeance of eternal fire;” of being “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord?” I am fully persuaded that if the eyes of your understanding were only opened to conceive the ten thousandth part of your danger, of the guilt of sin, of the justice of Jehovah, of the torment which awaits the impenitent, you could think of nothing else but deliverance; you could enjoy no peace in your minds, you could take *no sleep to your eyes*, until you found reconciliation in the blood of the Lamb.—The man under the sentence of death, who does not know but the next may be the fatal hour of execution, cannot be unconcerned; the man seized with some poignant disorder, which is already reaching his vitals, and threatening his instant destruction, cannot be unconcerned; the man rolling on some mighty water, and liable every moment to be overwhelmed, cannot be unconcerned; the man exposed in the open field, when the tempest is collecting its fury, when the lightnings are flashing and the thunders rattling over his head, cannot be unconcern-

ed ; but what is the terror of either of these situations ? what are the accumulated terrors of all these situations, compared with thine, unpardoned sinner ? The curse of God is upon thee ; the wrath of God hangs over thee ; hell from beneath opens wide to receive thee ; infernal spirits long for permission to drag thee down to their horrible abodes ; and yet canst *thou* be unconcerned ? “ As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between thee and death ; ” there is but *a vapor* between thee and unquenchable flames ; and let me forewarn thee, before thou hast taken the adventurous leap, that it is EVERLASTING, EVERLASTING, EVERLASTING *punishment*. What heart does not start back with horror at the very thought ? EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT ! Were it torment for a day, however exquisite, it might be endured ; were it punishment for a month, a year, an age, or a series of ages, some hardy spirit might dare encounter its terror, but who can deliberately lie down in NEVER ENDING pain ? Awful overwhelming anticipation ! After myriads of ages have revolved, and myriads, and myriads have succeeded, it will be only the morning of their misery, the first fruits of their hell : Be forewarned also, dearly beloved youth, that *your* punishment must be aggravated by all the instructions and all the intreaties that you have enjoyed in time.—Better for you that you had been born among the Indians of the west, among

the Africans of the south, or the frozen inhabitants of the north, where the bible was never seen, where the voice of reconciliation was never heard, nor the privileges of the sabbath and sanctuary enjoyed. How must it increase your misery to recollect in hell the precious seasons that passed over you on earth; to recall to mind the numerous warnings, the pressing, affectionate invitations which you enjoyed through the week and on the Sabbath, in private and in public, from your parents and your ministers, who were willing "to endure all things" for your conversion? Nay, the torment even of devils will be easily borne compared with yours, if "you neglect so great salvation." It will in some measure gild the gloom of their prison, and soften the horrors of their hell, that no door of mercy was ever opened for their return; that although they sinned against God, yet they never resisted light so clear, they never abused love so astonishing, they never trampled on that very body which was crucified, on that very blood which was shed for their pardon.—By these terrors of the Lord I would "urge and entreat" you to flee "from the wrath to come." God is my witness that I wish not to "torment you before the time," only in the pleasing hope of at least *saving some*.

From this moment let the salvation of your souls be the great business of your lives; let it employ your thoughts by day and by night. Rather neglect all other

concerns; rather neglect the duties of your calling, rather neglect eating when hungry, drinking when thirsty, sleeping in its season; rather suffer your bodies to pine in the most exquisite pain, or to bleach in the winter's blast, than neglect the great work of salvation. I solemnly declare that I consider it as of comparatively no consequence what be your condition in this world, what affliction, what reproach, what contempt you endure; the soul, eternity is all. What consolation did it afford the rich man in hell to recollect his former prosperity? to remember that, on earth, he had been "clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day?" to look back in imagination upon his splendid houses, his well filled barns, his fruitful orchards, his cultivated fields? did the recollection of all this pomp, of all these treasures procure the abatement of his torment a single moment? could it bribe the never-dying worm to cease its preying, or the flames to moderate their fury? On the other hand, did it in the least detract from the happiness of Lazarus; did it either lessen the joys or obscure the glories of his heaven, that he had lived neglected upon earth, that he had been an outcast from society, that he was fed with the crumbs which fell from the table of another, and that the dogs were the only physicians which administered to his sores? Now he reposes in *Abraham's bosom*, while the other is *tormented in the flames*.—"Acquaint

now yourselves with God and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto you. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, in which thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them."

With these practical instructions I must now solemnly surrender you to the disposal of a sovereign, gracious God; whatever may be my wishes and endeavors, his "counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." I cannot conceive a more important prayer in your behalf, nor one more suitable at the conclusion of this discourse, than that "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness would shine in your hearts giving you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Were this your happy attainment, I should expect to see you growing up the comfort of your connexions, the blessing of your generation, the glory of Zion, and the ornament of your nature; I should expect to behold you hereafter "as trees of righteousness the planting of the Lord," each of you, in his own order, transplanted into the paradise above, there to flourish in unfading bloom. AMEN. *So let it be, O Lord.*



CONCLUSION OF THE "ONE THING NEEDFUL."

AS Jehovah the Spirit usually works more immediately by his own word, and honors it

as the instrument of convincing and converting the soul, I have added various passages of scripture which tend to enforce the preceding discourses ; they are arranged in the order of the sermons, and distinctly numbered, to convince the reader that these admonitions depend not on the wisdom of man, but on the authority of God ; and that if unhappily they are neglected, the contempt is shewn not to us, but to him.

SERMON 1.—*A call to the secure.*

“What meanest thou, O sleeper ? arise, call upon thy God.”—*Jonah* i. 6.

“And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of thy sleep.”—*Rom.* xiii. 11.

“Wherefore, he saith, awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.”—*Eph.* v. 14.

“Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.”—*2 Peter* ii. 3.

SERMON 2.—*Repentance delayed and recourse to false refuges the occasion of final disappointment to many.*

“Because I have called and ye refused ; ye have set at nought all my counsel and would none of my reproof ; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.”—*Proverbs* i. 24, 25, 26.

“He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”—*Prov.* xxix. 1.

“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut; afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not.”—*Matthew xxv.* 10, 11, 12.

“And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it; saying, if thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes.”—*Luke xix.* 41, 42.

SERMON 3.—*The city of refuge opened to all who would escape the avenger of blood.*

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—*John iii.* 16.

“Even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”—*Rom. v.* 21.

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.”—*Ephesians i.* 7.

SERMON 4.—*Faith in the Son of God the great instrument of our salvation.*

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”—*John i.* 12.

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.”—*John* iii. 36.

“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—*Romans* v. 1.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”—*Eph.* ii. 8.

SERMON 5.—*The sinner encouraged and exhorted to return and live.*

“Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”—*Isaiah* lv. 7.

“I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him.”—*Hosea* xiv. 4.

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”—*2. Cor.* v. 19.

SERMON 6—*Religion recommended as the duty, and interest, and glory of the young.*

“And thou Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind; if thou seek him he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off for ever.”—*1 Chron.* xxviii. 9.

“Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth.”—*Jer.* iii. 4.

“My little children, of whom I travail in

birth again, until Christ be formed in you.”
—*Gal. iv. 19.*

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”—*2. Tim. iii. 15,*

BELOVED READER, hast thou perused the foregoing discourses and scriptures without any sensible advantage to thy soul? I entreat thee in the bowels of a compassionate Saviour to read them again; look them over with greater attention to the truths they contain, and more fervent prayer to the Holy Ghost for his blessing. Might not the bare *peradventure* that thou mayst be saved through *eternity*, reasonably call thee to the most painful diligence a few months or even ages in using the means of salvation? What patience do the children of this world exercise in pursuing their favorite objects; what fatigues do they endure; what perils do they encounter by sea and by land; what unknown regions do they explore for the acquisition of treasures or honors which they may not live another day to possess; and wilt thou be less diligent in acquiring an *unfading crown*, an *incorruptible inheritance*? But, beloved reader, thou hast not a bare *peradventure* only; thou hast the greatest encouragement; nay, every possible assurance that thou shalt not “strive or seek in vain. Then shall ye know him, if ye follow on to know the Lord.” Are you

not enjoined to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," that is to attend with all diligence every means of divine appointment, to exercise a holy fear lest you come short of so great salvation, with this positive assurance, "it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." He ordinarily breathes upon the soul in its humble, earnest, uniform attendance upon his own institutions, imparting spiritual and immortal life; these ordinances he often accompanies with almighty energy, convincing the unconvinced, converting the unconverted, and preparing the subjects of his grace for the possession of glory. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Therefore, as thy soul is precious, as an eternal redemption is provided, and as the Lord has ordained his own word to be the great means of applying this redemption, lose no opportunity of reading or hearing it. It was by an occasional, what the world would pronounce, an accidental attendance on the ministry of our Lord that Zaccheus received salvation to his soul and his house; it was by an occasional hearing of the apostles that the Lord "opened the heart of Lydia," enabling her "to attend to the things that were spoken;" it was by an occasional reading and hearing of the word that the Ethiopian Eunuch was savingly instructed and enabled "to go on his way rejoicing."

With the most diligent use of the word,

whether read or preached, I would urge upon thee devoutly and explicitly to covenant with the Lord Jesus ; endeavor to make the most solemn, particular, unreserved application of him as thine own Saviour and portion ; thine own *wisdom* for all saving instruction ; thine own *righteousness* for complete reconciliation ; thine own *sanctification* for beginning and perfecting a work of holiness in the *inner man* ; thine own *redemption* for delivering thy soul at death and thy body at the resurrection from all their bondage, from all that dominion to sin, and satan, and the grave, to which they were exposed. O reader, be instant, be earnest in coming to Jesus, in closing with Jesus as thine all both NOW AND FOR EVER. Perhaps the moment in which thou art reading this page may be the last moment of mercy to thee ; perhaps the entreaty, which in God's name is now solemnly presented, may be the last voice of mercy which shall ever salute thine ears : for ought I know, or thou knowest, thy breath may instantly *depart*, thy body become a lifeless mass, and thy soul be summoned to the tribunal of its Judge. Under this impression, and with an earnestness, a solemnity becoming one that must perish eternally without an interest in Christ, approach him and expostulate with him in the following manner. " Lord Jesus, I am a lost, perishing sinner, I have wilfully *destroyed myself* by adding to my original guilt many actual crimes ; I have grieved

thy most blessed Spirit by not yielding to his admonitions ; I have wasted my merciful day by a most shameful indifference ; I now *appear before thee in my sins*, as one of the *most poor, blind, naked, miserable wretches* out of hell, but I am willing to receive all as a free gift at thy hand, and be an eternal debtor to the riches of thy mercy ; I cannot believe, but, O blessed Saviour, "I look to thee as the author and finisher of faith ;" I cannot repent, but art "thou not exalted to give repentance and remission of sins ?" my guilt is truly great, mine iniquities are more in number than the hairs upon my head, and each enough to sink a soul to hell, but thou art God, and therefore MIGHTY, ALL-MIGHTY to save ; "there is redemption in thy most precious blood for the very chief of sinners." THOU ONLY HOPE of perishing sinners, do not cast me off ; I cannot go away without thy blessing ; I cannot bear the thought of being an eternal outcast from thy presence ; I cannot dwell with devils, I cannot lie down a prey to *devouring flames* ; only let me touch *the borders of thy garment*, give me the lowest station in thy service on earth, and the lowest mansion in thy glory above, I am willing to stand as a chief monument of mercy to the eternal astonishment of angels and of the universe." Thus cast yourself at the Saviour's feet ; imitate him who "wept and made supplication, resolving, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. Let the

kingdom of heaven be suffering violence through thine importunity, and let the violent take it by force. Ask in faith," in the full persuasion that Jesus is both able and willing to receive thee. I will now take my leave of the reader, reminding him with all affection of the weighty admonitions of our Lord to Martha, **ONE THING IS NEEDFUL**, infinitely **NEEDFUL**; if this is secured, thine all, comparatively, is secured; if this is neglected thine all is neglected, thine all is lost, and that to all eternity. Thou mayst enjoy all that temporal happiness which thy carnal heart can desire, or thy carnal imagination paint; thou mayst treasure up gold "like the stones of the brook," and climb to the very summit of earthly greatness, but if *the good part is wanting*, thou art *laboring in vain*; thou art only preparing a more splendid entrance into the *blackness of darkness*: none probably drop deeper into perdition than those who slip from the heights of human affluence and honor; to none will the torments of hell be more intolerable than to those "who put far away the evil day; who lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches; who eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall. Who chant to the sound of the viol, that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointment, but they are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph;" they are not duly exercised about their own salvation. **AMEN.**

THE
BARREN FIG-TREE CUT DOWN;

ALSO
THE HEALING BALM
ADMINISTERED TO THE DISEASED SOUL;

TWO LECTURES.

A NEW YEAR'S GIFT,
FOR JANUARY 1, 1806.

LECTURE I.

LUKE xiii, 6, 7, 8, 9.—*He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he, answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

THE mode of instruction among the nations of the east, and particularly among the Jews, was chiefly by parable: The speaker, in order more deeply to arrest the attention of his audience, employed some object which was familiar to their senses as the representation of moral or spiritual truth, and thus, through the medium of their bodily organs, he conveyed important instruction to their hearts. Sages among the heathen, prophets under the Old Testament, and our Divine Redeemer, while “he tabernacled” in our world, usually conversed in this manner. *The sower of the natural seed is employed to represent the Son of Man as a prophet preaching righteousness in the great congregation; the field to point out*

the word ; the good seed to denote the children of the kingdom, and the tares, the children of the wicked one ; the enemy sowing these tares is designed to represent the devil ; the harvest the end of the world, and the reapers the holy angels. In some instances the meaning of the parable was obvious at its first delivery, in others more obscure and difficult in its application, to exercise the faith and patience of the hearers. Among all the parables uttered by our Lord, few contain instruction more important and awful than the one which we have read as the subject of our present meditations.

Commentators in general, and with great propriety, apply this parable to the Jewish nation. They were *as a fig-tree*, planted in the vineyard of Jehovah, being early taken into a covenant relation with himself, brought into the sacred enclosure of his church, and distinguished with many and important privileges. "He gave his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel, he hath not dealt so with any nation." To them "pertained the adoption and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises: The three years" mentioned in the seventh verse are usually considered as relating to the period of our Lord's ministry among the Jews, the time which intervened between his baptism by John and his sufferings and death on Calvary. The great husbandman is represented as expecting "fruit. those

three years," because their advantages were peculiarly great: "God, who at sundry times, and in diverse manners, spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets," at that time addressed them *by his own Son*. The Lord of glory, clothed with human nature, labored personally among them; afforded the most luminous example of piety to God and good will to men; spake the oracles of his Father with a zeal, and purity, and power such as "man never spake," and enforced the doctrines of his mouth with many and splendid miracles of his hands: But where was their fruit amidst opportunities so rare and precious? When the great husbandman "looked these three years that this vineyard should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes." This nation returned enmity for love; the more they were entreated, the more they opposed, and instead of embracing the doctrines delivered by the compassionate Saviour, they exclaimed, with a rage more than infernal, *crucify him, crucify him*, and at last imbrued their hands in his blood. When we apply *the three years* mentioned in the parable to the personal ministry of our Lord among the Jews, the sentence afterwards denounced, *cut it down*, alludes to their rejection as a nation. "Wrath came upon them to the very uttermost" for crucifying the Lord of glory, and obstinately resisting his gospel as afterwards preached by the apostles. "And when they opposed them-

selves and blasphemed, he, Paul, shook his raiment and said unto them, your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.”—

At that moment the Jewish nation, as a barren fig-tree, was virtually *cut down*; the lamp of ordinances was blown out, the common operations of the Holy Ghost were restrained, and deluded Israel sealed up in ignorance and impenitence “until the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in.” This curse was more visibly executed in the destruction of their city about forty years after the ascension of our Lord. The judgment denounced by the prophet was then literally fulfilled, “I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down.” Nearly eighteen hundred years, to pursue the metaphor used in the parable, they have been as a tree withered to the root; “they have been an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations whither the Lord has driven them.”

Suffer me to remark on this passage, that the Lord God, in righteous indignation, sometimes un-churches a congregation or a nation at once; after he has long tried them with a pure dispensation of his gospel; after he has dealt with them by judgments and mercies, by ordinances and providences, without any visible amendment, he suddenly delivers them up as incorrigible;

he concludes of them as he did of Ephraim, "he is joined to his idols, let him alone;" "he removes his candlestick," and no longer tortures them with that light against which they shut their eyes; he withdraws that Spirit, in his convincing and alarming influences, which they had industriously quenched, and gives them up to final impenitence and unconcern.—Such was the judgment of which he forewarned the church of Ephesus, and under the weight of which it has groaned seventeen hundred years past. "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen and repent and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Brethren, does it not become us as a congregation to take the alarm? Have we not reason to apprehend that this awful judgment is awaiting ourselves? In Salem the tabernacle of the Lord of hosts was early erected; the lamp of ordinances was lighted up at the first settlement of the town, and has shown ever since with little interruption, while the neighboring settlements remained in a great measure destitute of this heavenly *vision*; but are we walking "as the children of the light?" We have been exalted above others in external opportunities, are we proportionably exalted above them by our knowledge in the mysteries of the gospel, by the blamelessness of our conduct, by the purity and heavenliness of our conversation? The Lord is

my witness, that it occasions "great heaviness, and almost continual sorrow in my heart," to notice the visible and increasing proofs of spiritual decay. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord savingly revealed" from sabbath to sabbath? There is little evidence that the gospel preached is "the wisdom of God, or the power of God, to the salvation of hearers." Amidst the eagerness of worldly pursuit, who are "giving diligence to make their calling and election sure?" Who are striving to take the kingdom of heaven by violence, and "laboring for the meat which endureth to everlasting life?" Amidst the frequent and anxious inquiries "what shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewithal shall we be clothed?" who are heard to inquire, how shall I escape "the wrath that is to come?" how shall I "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life?" The gospel, we have reason to fear, is losing its efficacy on the souls of many. Are not some becoming more indifferent about attending the means of salvation? Are not many individuals living without the fear of God, and families without the voice of prayer and praise? Have not some, who once named the name of Jesus, by partaking the common and special privileges of his house, in a great measure turned their back upon both? "Ye that make mention of the Lord," of whom I know there is a precious "remnant;" ye whose hearts are warm with love to his name, and

zeal for his honor, "keep not silence in this day of darkness and gloominess;" be awakened to double earnestness, striving with Israel's God for his gracious return; "give him no rest until he arise" and grant a "time of refreshing from his presence." The prospect of natural famine would be awful: were it foretold by a messenger of the Lord, that the next year "our heavens should become as brass and our earth as iron," that the staff of life should be cut off, that the pastures should be parched in the fields, that the corn should perish in the vallies, and the fruit fail in the orchards, what alarm would instantly spread? What paleness would gather on every countenance, and agony rend every heart? But is not the prospect of a spiritual famine infinitely more awful? How melancholy, how melting is even the apprehension that there should be a "want, not of bread, nor of water, but of the word of the Lord;" that Zion's provision should fail and that the bread of immortal life should no longer be enjoyed in the sanctuary? Brethren, this is no unreal terror. Without a suitable improvement of our privileges, this judgment may be apprehended, it must be expected, it must be expected speedily. "The day of the Lord," of his visitation for mercies misimproved, "so cometh as a thief in the night." Read the doom which was long since executed upon the church in Sardis; and be it remembered that the Lord God is as faithful to his threatenings now,

as he was in ages that are past ; he is no less righteous to take vengeance on a *lukewarm*, formal church in Salem, than on a lukewarm, formal church in Sardis. "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write :—These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars, I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead. Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent.—If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

The eighth verse presents to our view the intercession of the vine-dresser in behalf of that tree, and his resolution to persevere in diligently cultivating it. "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it." This may be applied to our Lord, who earnestly implored mercy in behalf of the Jews, his betrayers and murderers ; even when his blood was flowing by their "cruel hands," his soul ascended in ardent intercession for their salvation, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." He expostulated that the sin which they were then committing might not be "laid to their charge ;" that his blood which they were shedding with unrelenting fury might rest not on their heads as a curse, but on their consciences for pardon and reconciliation. It may also allude to the fervent wrestlings of the apostles in behalf of their deluded brethren the Jews. Stephen

with his expiring breath implores forgiving mercy ; “ he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge ;” and Paul would willingly have been “accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.”

This parable is concluded by presenting to us the submission of the vine-dresser to the will of his Lord ; “ if it bear fruit, well, if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” This corresponds in part to the words of our Saviour himself. He who had often intreated with the Jews ; who had “ offered up strong cries and tears in” their behalf, for their temporal welfare and eternal salvation, at last delivers them up to the vengeance of his Father. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem—how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, but ye would not ; behold your house is left unto you desolate ; and verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me until the time come when ye shall say blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Such also was the acquiescence of the apostles in the doom of their obstinate, incorrigible countrymen. “ Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, it was necessary that the word of God should have been first spoken to you ; it was proper in order to display the abounding grace of Jehovah that your nation, which “ murdered the Prince of life,” should enjoy the first offers of reconciliation through his blood ; “ but

seeing ye put it from you," since ye repeatedly and obstinately resist these tenders of mercy, "lo, we turn to the Gentiles;" they consent to their rejection as a nation; they acquiesce that this "natural olive," barren and withered, "should be cut off," and that the Gentiles, "the wild olive, might be grafted in."

Although this parable has a primary reference to the Jewish nation during the ministry of our Lord, and their future destruction, yet it admits of an application more general, and may be considered as referring to the gospel church or to each individual professor in all ages.—The parables, like the prophecies of scripture, frequently admit of a two fold application.—They relate to some particular object immediately in view, or to some event shortly to be accomplished, and through these they contemplate another object more general, and another event to take place in a different country or distant age. The parable of the sower is evidently of this nature. "The sower" primarily pointed out "the Son of Man," from whom, as the glorious prophet of his church, all her doctrines are derived; this "sower" alluded remotely to the ministers of reconciliation in every future age; they go forth in the name of Jesus, dispensing the word of life, scattering around the incorruptible seed from which, through his blessing, springs up an abundant harvest to his own praise and the salvation of many.

To this class belongs the parable which we design as the subject of our present consideration. Although it immediately respected the posterity of Abraham, their exalted privileges under the ministry of our Lord, and their final rejection as his peculiar people, yet it remotely points to all nations in all ages under a pure dispensation of the gospel.

“A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard.” A “vineyard” both naturally and beautifully represents the visible church: it is the object of the husbandman’s particular attention, it is carefully fenced around, and thus not only distinguished from the other parts of his heritage, but secured “from the boar of the wood,” or whatever might either deface the beauty or devour the fruit of its trees. The church, in like manner, is peculiarly the object of Jehovah’s attention and concern. “The Lord’s portion is his people and Jacob is the lot of his inheritance; I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” The church has her wall cast around both for distinction and defence; by her discipline and government she is distinguished from the world in general and the *precious* are separated from the *vile*. A vineyard is highly cultivated; the husbandman usually occupies more time, and incurs greater expence in improving this, than the other parts of his inheritance: he is careful to enrich the soil, to cultivate

the trees and use every mean that is apparently adapted to render them fruitful.—The church also is highly favored of the Lord, and in point of outward privilege exalted incomparably above the rest of the world. “You only,” saith the Lord of hosts, addressing his professing people, “you only have I known of all the families of the earth;” “I have distinguished you with my gospel, with the ministry of peace, with the common operations of my Spirit, with every means of grace and the free offers of future glory, while the rest of the world, like the trees of the forest, are left to the rudeness and barrenness of their natural state, “being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” Again, the husbandman entertains much higher expectations of advantage from his vineyard, than from the other parts of his heritage. In proportion to all the time and toil and expence which he bestows in fencing it around, in enriching the soil or pruning the trees, does he expect that fruit will be returned in its season. The living God, in like manner, expects a greater revenue of glory, more abundant returns of love, and gratitude, and praise from the members of his church, than from the rest of the world; and he is disappointed and grieved when these returns are not made. How affecting is the following appeal of Jehovah, respecting Israel his pro-

fessing people, under the emblem of a vineyard? "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

Again, he complains by the same prophet, "I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against me: The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib," "the very beasts of the field do service to their owner and are grateful to the hand which feeds them; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

The "fig-tree" here mentioned denotes the hearers of the gospel, and more especially the open professors of religion. They "are planted in the vineyard" when they become initiated into the church by the ordinance of baptism; when by the power of the word preached and the common influences of divine grace they are restrained in some degree from the pollutions of the world, and yield themselves up to the Lord. "The certain man" planting "this fig-tree" is our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom, as Mediator of the covenant, the administration of the gospel is wholly committed. To reward his former humiliation and sufferings "all power in heaven and earth" are "given unto" him; he erects a church in our world, he institutes with infinite wisdom, and regulates with adorable sovereignty every thing appertaining to this church; he qualifies "pastors according to his own heart" for

dispensing the word of life ; he furnishes her with doctrines, and discipline, and worship, thus affording her every outward mean that is necessary for promoting the order, instruction and salvation of her members.—
 “ The Father loveth the Son, and hath committed all things into his hand. He is the head over all things to the church which is his body ; the fulness of him that filleth all and in all.”

“ And he came and sought fruit thereon.”
 The Son of Man is no indifferent spectator of his church upon earth ; he walks in “ the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,” and marks with awful jealousy the conduct of all who sit under their light ; of all who enjoy the privileges of his house and are called by his name ; he notices whether their progress in knowledge and grace bears any suitable proportion to the privileges enjoyed. Men frequently sit with ease and indifference under the ministry of the word ; regard the voice of the preacher as a “ pleasant song ;” attend the sanctuary as a piece of civility, or with the design of passing an hour ; they give themselves no anxiety about embracing that Saviour who is offered, or laying up “ the word of God in their hearts, that they may practise it in their lives ;” they are as perfectly indifferent whether they attend ordinances, or whether the gospel be embraced when they do attend, as if the message of wrath or reconciliation had no relation to them ; but however indifferent they are a-

about the improvement of these ordinances, the Lord of glory is not indifferent; the blessings of salvation were costly beyond expression to him, being procured by no other price than the effusion of his own blood, he therefore notices what improvement is made of them; whether our hearts are suitably impressed with redeeming love; whether we cordially accept that redemption which he accomplished by a painful death upon the cross; and whether we "walk worthy of him who hath called us to glory and virtue. He came and sought fruit thereon;" he went "down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished and the pomegranates budded;" he is really, though invisibly, present in this worshipping assembly to mark the frame of each individual, and he will shortly "come in the clouds of heaven to give every man according to his works."

"And found none." This tree, planted in a fertile soil, hedged around from all that might injure it, cultivated with particular care and skill, watered with the refreshing showers of heaven, and warmed with the genial beams of the sun, STOOD BARREN; it probably abounded with leaves, appeared flourishing to the eye of a distant observer, but upon close examination was found utterly destitute of fruit; it perhaps presented some blossoms in spring, but those gradually withered away and only served to aggra-

vate the disappointment of the proprietor. This tree is a very affecting and awful emblem of multitudes in the visible church. They occupy a place in the house of God ; " they sit " as his " people sit ; " they unite in the external parts of his worship, in praise and prayer and hearing of the word, but advance no farther ; they are never savingly convinced " of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment ; " they are " almost persuaded to be christians, but they do not actually close with Jesus for pardon and life ; conscience is occasionally startled under the powerful application of the law, or some fearful visitation of Providence, but these " wounds are slightly healed up ; " instead of improving " the balm of Gilead and the physician there," they have recourse to some legal performances, to their repentance, their prayers, and on these attainments they sit down " two-fold more the children of hell " than formerly. " The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

" Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard : " Ministers " are workers together with God " in managing his church upon earth ; they are called to labor in his vineyard, when they are solemnly set apart to serve at the altar, " to warn the unruly, to comfort the feeble minded, to reprove, to rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." The ministers of reconciliation are emphatically called " laborers in,"

or “dressers of the vineyard,” being required, as much as possible, to leave the common employments of the world and to spend their time and strength within the inclosure of the church ; they have authority from Christ the adorable proprietor “to dress his vineyard,” to cut off with the discipline of his house, as with a pruning knife, the withered, rotten branches, and to cultivate those which “bear fruit that they may bring forth more fruit.”

“Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none.” *Behold*; this exclamation is frequently employed in scripture and is designed to rouse the attention of the hearer ; to prepare him for the reception of some truth new and interesting. Sometimes it denotes grief, sometimes joy, and sometimes astonishment. In the present instance it may be considered as expressing equally emotions of wonder and grief ; of wonder at the stupidity, the infatuation, and even madness of men, that although “wise as serpents” in the concerns of time they are more stupid than the “ostrich or the stork” in the great interests of eternity. They “will not come to” Jesus that they “may have life ;” amidst ten thousand warnings from the word, and Spirit, and providence of God, they suffer “their harvest to pass, their summer to end” without a serious thought about their salvation.—The exclamation, *behold*, also expresses grief for their ruin which is speedily and

unavoidably approaching. "He beheld the city and wept over it ; saying, if thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

"These three years I come." A particular period is here mentioned to shew that the Lord God knows exactly the opportunities that have been enjoyed by any person or people ; he "has written in his volume" how long such a man or woman has lived under the means of grace ; how many admonitions or entreaties have sounded in their ears ; how often they have quietted conscience or grieved the Spirit by dismissing their serious impressions to *a more convenient time*. "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, it is a people that do err in their hearts and they have not known my ways."

"Cut it down." After this fig-tree had long remained barren, and all means for restoring it to usefulness had failed, the proprietor commands that *the axe be laid to the root*, and that it be immediately cut off. This evidently points out the destruction which finally awaits the ungodly. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." This judgment is sometimes executed in the present life : a righteous God, having strived with the sinner in vain, at last leaves him to his own delusions, withdraws from him the restraining influences of his grace, and ceases either to reprove or exhort.—

“Why should they be stricken any more? they will only revolt more and more.” The transgressor, thus forsaken of God, is virtually *cut off*; although he may continue naturally alive, yet, in a spiritual sense, he is *twice dead*; conscience becomes “seared as with a hot iron” and ordinances and providences are equally unprofitable; the administration of the gospel, however pure or powerful, like the dropping of water on the rock, makes no visible impression, or like the falling of rain on the barren sand, is not attended with any fruit. This curse was fearfully executed upon the obstinate Israelites as a warning to those “who should afterwards live ungodly. I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor digged, but there shall come up briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.”

This curse is executed fully and formally in death. While the sinner is spared in the land of the living he enjoys many privileges; the light of the gospel, however neglected, shines around his tabernacle; the offers of salvation, although slighted, are saluting his ears; the dews of divine grace, although accompanied with no lasting effects, occasionally descend around his camp; “the prayers of the upright,” however disregarded or spurned, frequently ascend to “the mercy seat” in his behalf: But in death he is utterly separated from all these privileges and consigned to endless despair. “Cast ye the

unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Bear with me, beloved brethren, if I depart from the subject a few moments by remarking,

1st. That the sentence is often executed *suddenly*. "The Son of Man cometh in an hour that ye think not." The youth is snatched away "in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet; his breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow:" The rich are hurried off in the midst of their prosperity; when they imagine themselves "increased with goods and standing in need of nothing; when they are resolving to "take their ease, to eat, to drink and be merry," the message bursts unwelcome upon their ears, "prepare to meet your God:" The children of mirth receive their summons in the very moment of their intoxicating pleasures; the gaieties of the dance or the theatre are exchanged for the solemnities of the judgment seat; the cup of pleasure drops from their hand and is replaced "with the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation;" and the sportive, enchanting music is succeeded by the voice of the insulted, indignant Saviour, "depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire. He that being often reprov'd and hardeneth his neck shall **SUDDENLY** be cut off: for when they shall say, peace and safe-

ty, then **SUDDEN** destruction cometh upon them, and pain as upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.”

2d. This sentence is executed *irresistibly*. There is no possibility of standing when the Lord God cometh forth in fury. The heart that was once harder than adamant is melted in a moment; the neck which stood more stubborn than the *iron sinew* is instantly broken; the tongue which was loud in *vain boasting* and blasphemy falters, becomes silent as the grave; the arm which was lifted up in defiance of earth and heaven, instantly drops to rise no more.—“ I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. If I whet my glittering sword and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies and reward them that hate me.” Is the feeble insect easily crushed by the falling rock, or the feather swept down by the swelling torrent, or the tallest cedar torn to pieces by the lightnings of heaven? with an ease infinitely greater is the youngest, the strongest, the hardiest, the mightiest of mortals crushed by the arm of almighty God.—“ Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire and the rocks are thrown down by him.”

3d. This sentence is executed *irreversibly*; and places the sinner beyond the reach of hope for ever and ever. “ He that

being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall—be destroyed without remedy.—There is no reversion of the decree when once executed ; there is no redemption for the soul when once damned. The purpose of the Eternal, like an impassible *gulph*, separates heaven and hell, “ so that they who would pass from” the former to the latter *cannot* : Was it possible for holy angels or men to look down from their mansions in glory and pity the implacable enemy of God, they could not pass over to relieve him, and the wretched inhabitants of hell, “ bound hand and foot, cannot pass” from thence to heaven.—You cannot mention to me a condition in this world which is altogether desperate. The man who has squandered his fortune may possibly regain it by industry and economy ; he who has lost his good name by violence or fraud may retrieve it by a course of upright, virtuous conduct ; even the man who has forfeited his life to civil justice may find an everlasting refuge by making his peace with God through the mediation of Jesus ; but damnation, if you will allow the expression, is a disease without a cure ; it is ruin without any conceivable relief or remedy.—Does the sinner survey the region of hell around him ? he finds none that either *can* or *would* pity him ; there is no tender eye to drop a tear over his misery, nor soothing voice to impart consolation into his ears. Like the prodigal in the parable, he “ begins to be in want and no

man gives unto him." Does he lift up his eyes towards heaven, and ask the sympathy of his former acquaintances or friends now in bliss? they would reply to him as Abraham to the rich man, "son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, but now thou art tormented without abatement or end." Does he look for mercy to God the Judge of all, or Jesus the Mediator? they would only "laugh at his calamity," and frown him deeper into the flames.— "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

"Why cumbereth it the ground?" The word we translate "cumbereth" can scarcely be expressed in its full meaning. It does not signify merely to stand useless and unprofitable, or to fill up the place on which another might grow to the advantage of the proprietor, but it properly signifies "to destroy or make the ground of no effect;" the inspired evangelist probably intended to represent it as absorbing the juices of the earth, and by a kind of deadly influence blasting the fruit of the neighboring trees. No man can be considered a mere blank in the visible church; the loose, carnal professor is not only useless, but pernicious; he is not only unprofitable to God, by failing to answer the end of his creation and redemption, but is actually a reproach and injury to his cause upon earth; his irregular walk and conversation prove a stumbling block to the

righteous, and imbolden others in iniquity. The professor of religion, who doth not abound "with the fruits of righteousness to the glory and praise of God," is a real dishonor by his barrenness; as we conclude that there must be a defect either in the soil or climate, or some other circumstance, when the tree stands from season to season without bearing any fruit.

"And he answering said, Lord, let it alone this year also." These words express the unfeigned grief of the "vine-dresser" upon hearing the doom that was denounced against this tree, and his intercession that it might be spared for another experiment. "Let it alone;" overlook the circumstance of its barrenness; afford it a spot in thy vineyard until another season of bearing; peradventure it will disappoint thy fears and reward thy patience with abundant fruit. The faithful shepherd is peculiarly anxious for the welfare of his flock; a concern for the interest of his master constrains him to watch with unwearied care that none of them should perish; a humane physician feels for the patient under his direction; he sympathizes with him in distress, and uses every probable means for restoring him to health; the bowels of a tender mother move towards a beloved child in jeopardy of its life; how eagerly would she snatch it from the brink of some fathomless gulph or the fury of a devouring flame; but incomparably more anxious is the humane, conscientious

pastor for the salvation of souls committed to his care. "He watches over them" not only as "one who must give account" to God for his fidelity, but as one who really pities their delusion, and secretly recoils at the thought of their destruction.—With unfeigned sincerity he can appropriate the language of the prophet, "I have not desired the evil day thou knowest. The priests, the ministers of the Lord" are commanded "to weep between the porch and the altar, and say, spare my people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach."

"Till I shall dig around it and dung it." Till I examine its roots to discover what can be the particular cause of its defect, and try other methods for restoring it to fruitfulness. The vine-dresser was willing to persevere year after year in cultivating this tree, and try experiment after experiment to see if it could not be rendered profitable to the husbandman. The ambassador of Jesus will "reprove and rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." Former disappointments will only excite him to greater diligence and importunity in time to come. Although "the bones in the valley are many and very dry," yet he will continue to "prophecy;" he will earnestly expostulate, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord," encouraged by a PERADVENTURE that *the breath may yet enter* and they become spiritually alive. "I endure all things for the elect's sake that they may ob-

tain salvation which is in Christ Jesus with everlasting glory." No fatigue, no reproach, or poverty is regarded, while there remains a probability, even a possibility that they may repent and be saved. When he contemplates the immense value of the human soul ; when he realizes its inconceivable capacity of happiness in the enjoyment of Jehovah, or misery under the pressure of his wrath ; when he looks forward in imagination through the lapse of myriads of ages and views it as either approaching nearer to God in a perfection of bliss, or sinking deeper in the gulph of perdition, when these things are duly realized, the pastor will be ready to exclaim of each hearer, "how shall I give thee up?" "How shall I cease to instruct and exhort and admonish? I cannot deliver thee up to thy present ignorance, or obstinacy, or sensuality with the belief that thou shouldst fall a prey to the second death and the damnation of hell. "I could wish that myself were accursed* from Christ for

* Few passages of scripture are attended with more difficulty than this, and there are few in the explication of which the ingenuity of the learned has been more exercised. But amidst the variety of opinion entertained by commentators, none appears more simple in itself, nor more agreeable to the analogy of faith than that of the profound Dr. Waterland.—The Greek preposition which is generally rendered *from*, he translates *after the example of Christ*. The meaning of the apostle, in wishing himself *accursed from Christ*, appears evidently to be the following. "I could cheerfully be considered the "off-scouring of all things;" I could submit to any reproach or torture which the rage of persecution might invent or inflict: nay, in conformity to the example of my adorable Lord, I am ready to offer up my body to the ignominious, agonizing death of the cross could I only be the instrument of salvation to my brethren the Jews; could I only res-

my brethren ; I could submit to any suffering either outward or inward for a time could I only be instrumental in rescuing them from the "vengeance of eternal fire."

"If it bear fruit, well." "If these means should be crowned with success, and this tree which has long stood barren should at length become useful, the issue would be happy indeed ; thy design in planting it here at first and sparing it so long would be answered ; the tree itself would be preserved from the reproach of present barrenness and future destruction, and all my anxiety respecting it, all my toil in digging about it, in pruning and cultivating it would be infinitely rewarded : its fruitfulness hereafter might in some measure compensate for all the injury which it has occasioned to thy vineyard by its barrenness in years past." The conversion of a sinner to the living God is an event inconceivably desirable. Thereby glory redounds to each Person in Jehovah, joy is afforded to blessed angels and men, and a foundation is laid for his own happiness through the endless ages of eternity.—

cue them from their present delusion, and that ruin which infallibly awaits their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah." Such is the translation which that ingenious divine gives to the same preposition in another instance. *Whom I serve from*, that is, "after the manner or example of" *my forefathers*. We can by no means suppose that the apostle wished himself to be an eternal outcast from the gracious presence of his Redeemer. This is directly repugnant to that principle of self-love which necessarily belonged to him as a man and a christian ; a principle which christianity does not extinguish but cherishes. Although we are commanded to love our "neighbors as ourselves," neither reason, nor revelation requires us to love our neighbor better than ourselves.

“He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” The conversion of an aged sinner is, in a certain sense, still more desirable ; the fears of the righteous are thereby disappointed ; the toils, and tears, and anxieties of godly ministers are amply rewarded ; the artifices and powers of hell are baffled, and the glories of free grace most illustriously displayed. The forbearance of God is manifested in sparing the sinner so long ; his sovereignty in calling him at “the eleventh hour ;” his power in “casting the devil from a strong hold” which he had long and securely occupied, also in destroying the force of corruption which had strengthened with age ; the overflowing of his grace in giving a free, a full remission of sins aggravated in their nature and multiplied in their number, in snatching the sinner when tottering on the very verge of hell and “setting him among princes, even the princes of his people. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy,” says the apostle alluding to his advanced age when called by divine grace, and to the impieties of his former life, “that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them that should afterwards believe on him to life everlasting.”

“If not then after that thou shalt cut it down.” “If notwithstanding thy patience in sparing it from year to year, and all the means which by thy direction I have em-

ployed, it remains barren, then its destruction is unavoidable ; at present it serves only to "cumber thy vineyard;" it yields no advantage to the proprietor, it is no honor either to my diligence or skill as the immediate *dresser*, and it stands to the real injury of the trees around it." The damnation of those who go on wilfully, and incorrigibly in sin is inevitable. The moral order of the universe requires that each "transgression receive a just recompence of reward." The glories of each divine perfection demands that "the wicked be turned into hell;" that the fury of Jehovah go forth against the obstinate, implacable enemy of his government. His forbearance with men in times past, "his good will" in giving them "line upon line," warning after warning is no security, but it is only preparing them for a more unexpected and awful visitation at last. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."— O sinner, the decree shall sooner or later "overflow with righteousness," and the sword of justice, which has long slumbered, shall ere long awake and avenge the quarrel to the lowest hell; and remember, there will be none to pity thee throughout the universe of God. The Father, "who spared not his own Son" that he might spare thee, "will then laugh at thy calamity;" the Son,

who spared not his own life that he might spare thee ; “ who in the days of his flesh offered up strong cries and tears ” for thy deliverance, will then “ tread thee in his anger, and with thy blood will stain all his raiment ; ” holy angels, who would have cordially rejoiced at thy conversion, who would willingly have conveyed the pleasing tidings from earth to heaven that another child was born into the family of God, and have ministered to thee as “ an heir of salvation, ” these angels will then hasten to be the executioners of thy wrath, and will eternally glory in thy confusion and horror ; even ministers of the gospel who are now your “ servants for Jesus’ sake ; ” who in the hour of impending judgment stand between an offended God and their offending brethren, deprecating his displeasure and imploring his mercy ; who hold the lives of their hearers in some measure dear as their own, and are willing to make any sacrifice of their outward ease or interest in promoting their salvation, these ministers must finally acquiesce in the condemnation of their ungodly hearers. “ If not, then, after that thou shalt cut it down : ” Nay, so swallowed up will be their feelings as men, in zeal for their master’s glory, that they will even bring forward the unprofitable servant, and rouse the sword of justice to perform its office in his immediate perdition. Animated by the same spirit they will unite in the awful imprecation of the apostle, “ if any man love

not the Lord Jesus Christ," "if he deliberately chooses death rather than life by rejecting the only sacrifice for sin; if he will by a daring unbelief again and again "tread under foot that body which was crucified," and that blood which was shed for his redemption, let his choice be given him, "let him be anathema, maranatha."

As practical reflections have been occasionally made in the illustration of these verses, I shall only detain you with the following inference; that the destruction of the ungodly is certain, infallibly certain.— "Though hand join in hand the wicked shall not be unpunished;" and alas, brethren, are there not some, are there not many such in the midst of us? Suppose that the great Lord of the vineyard should this day pass through this part of his heritage, how many "barren fig-trees" might he behold; some that have stood ten or twenty, others that have been thirty or forty years under the means of cultivation without any sensible advantage? Has he not appointed one DRESSER and a second and a third to "dig about them," to use every means which might probably be effectual for rendering them profitable, but where are their appearances of fruit? "When he looked that they should bring forth grapes, have they not brought forth wild grapes?" "If the axe was" this moment "laid to the root" of each barren tree in this vineyard, how many monuments of wrath must appear? Or if all

who are spiritually dead were now struck naturally dead, how awful would be the scene? Would not some pious parent be left "to sorrow without hope" over a beloved, yet thoughtless child; or some devout, serious sister bewail the untimely end of a brother, who had lived without God, and now perished without hope? But I forbear indulging these melancholly reflections; I rather rejoice that you are spared another year, and most affectionately exhort you to awake from your security. May "not the time past of your life suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh?" Is all that you have been hearing, from season to season, of your spiritual and everlasting concerns an empty dream? Is the doctrine of an immortal soul, of death, and judgment, and heaven, and hell, a mere shadow without substance? are these doctrines "high swelling words" without ideas or realities? then "sleep on and take your rest." Let the drunkard freely quaff his flowing bowl; let the gay sport merrily in the enchanting dance; let the sons of wealth eat, drink, and be merry; let them sleep securely on "their beds of ivory, and chant to the sound of the harp;" let the young man rejoice in the days of his youth, quenching each anxious thought; let the despiser of divine ordinances persevere in this *despite*; let him neglect his bible, the duty of prayer, the institutions of the sabbath or sanctuary, and even deride those who are conscientious in observing them:

Indulge the pleasing dream, that "to-morrow shall be as this day and much more abundant." But conscience secretly starts back with horror at the thought ; this monitor within tells thee, and trembles under the conviction, that thou hast a soul to be saved or damned ; that there is a judgment to come ; that there is a dread, unknown eternity into which thou must speedily plunge. Is it not then folly, and madness, in the extreme, to halt another day without making preparation ? The man who hates his own flesh ; who obstinately pines away in hunger when bread is before him ; who shivers in the storm of winter, spurning the offers of either a shelter to cover or clothes to warm ; who wantonly mangles and tortures his own body, is ten thousand times less cruel to himself than he who "neglects so great salvation." If "he that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses : Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace ?" —Brethren, compassion to your souls constrains me to use "this plainness of speech ;" to propose any consideration that might probably operate either on your fears or hopes. Another period of your time is now closing ; the great husbandman has borne with you another year under the care of the

vine-dresser : Will you venture any longer in your present unconcern? I had almost said that if men are determined to remain in their sloth from season to season, the sooner they are cut off the better ; they only live to the dishonor of God, and to treasure up for themselves a more intolerable weight of wrath hereafter ; in hell they will indeed continue to sin against God, but their sin will not present that coloring of malignity. *There*, there will be no bible to neglect ; no ordinances to slight ; no tenders of salvation to reject ; no Spirit to grieve ; no " blood of the covenant to profane : the enmity of the damned shall eternally rise in opposition to the perfections of God, to the displays of his justice, and holiness, and sovereignty, and power ; but they will not have opportunity of trampling on love so tender, on forbearance so immense, on condescension and grace so rich and astonishing. Let every sinner in " this Zion be afraid," lest divine patience, worn out with his delay, yields to the demand of justice, " cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground ?" And, be it remembered by all, that as the tree falleth so it must lie, and that for ever.

LECTURE II.

HOSEA XIV, 4, 5, 6.

I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

THIS prophecy was delivered in the "reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah," a period truly alarming to the nation of Israel.—The cup of their iniquity was nearly filled up, and that cloud which had long been collecting and blackening over their heads was ready to burst forth in their destruction. The prophet therefore addresses them in the following melancholy, heart-melting strains, "rejoice not, O Israel, for joy as other people, for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God: The days of visitation are come; the days of recompence are come: My God shall cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations." But the Lord God is long suffering and plentiful in mercy; his judgments move slowly along that this infatuated people may enjoy another opportunity for repenting and escaping. Amidst the general gloom, there-

fore, a ray of hope beams forth in the chapter which we have read to cheer and encourage them. "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God." Jehovah, in the riches of his condescension, still acknowledges himself to be "their God." To each believing Israelite he stood in a covenant relation which could never be broken; which no change of time or circumstances could possibly dissolve; and to the Jews in general he stood in an external, covenant relation: He had not altogether rejected them as a people, but was yet known as "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob. O Israel, return." This apostate nation is invited back to God as their portion and glory. "Although ye have wantonly and shamefully departed from me; although ye have changed your God for them "that are no gods," by mingling in the idolatry of the heathen; although ye have trampled on my mercies and hardened yourselves against my judgments, yet I have no pleasure in your destruction, but would rather that you return and live; only acknowledge your iniquity, improve the sacrifice of my Son as the ground of your remission, and be restored to my favor." Mercy may be pronounced the *darling* perfection of Jehovah; this attribute he eminently displays in bearing with individuals and nations amidst their provocations, and using innumerable means for reclaiming them. Even after the decree for their destruction has seemingly gone forth, its ex-

ecution is suspended a little longer, and another experiment is made to see if they will hear and obey. "Go and proclaim these words towards the north and say, return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you." The prophet enforces his exhortation to *return*, by an argument drawn from those miseries to which their transgressions had exposed them, "thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. The ruin here spoken of may allude to those scourges which they had occasionally experienced from the Egyptians, the Amalekites and other neighboring nations; or it may refer to that invasion of the Assyrian army which they were shortly to expect. They are represented as *fallen* because, without speedy repentance and reformation, their ruin was as certain as if it had already taken place. Moral causes, in the righteous procedure of God, produce their proper effects, no less than natural causes, and a flood of impiety will be succeeded by a flood of wrath. Although the Lord God "is slow to anger," yet the judgment of a rebellious people will "not always linger, nor their" visitation "always slumber." Thou hast fallen "by thine iniquity."—Sin is the procuring cause of all misery, whether private or public; whether temporal or eternal. It destroyed "the old world with a deluge;" it brought "fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heavens upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and the other

cities of the plain ;” it leads on, in their turn, war and famine and pestilence, to sweep from the earth the implacable enemies of God: Sin was now delivering up the posterity of Abraham, who had long been the peculiar favorite of heaven, to a tedious, a painful, and reproachful servitude in a foreign land.—“O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, I will send him against the hypocritical nation; and against the people of my wrath will I give him charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.”—

Although the iniquities of individuals may pass unpunished in the present life, because their retribution may be expected hereafter, yet ungodly nations shall not escape. It is only in this world that they exist in a national capacity, therefore this world is the only place of national recompence.

In the verses which are chosen as the subject of our meditation, Israel’s God announces a variety of promises to encourage the Jews amidst their calamitous circumstances: But although these were uttered to the literal Israel ; although they immediately alluded to their deliverance from the iron chain in Babylon, and their future prosperity and glory ; yet they “are written for generations to come ;” they may be really improved for our consolation under a consciousness of backslidings, or appearances of the divine displeasure. God is an infinite speaker, and in these living oracles address-

es persons of all ages and all countries ; the wrath which he denounced against the offspring of Abraham for their apostacy, was designed for our admonition and alarm ; the promises of forgiveness and life, which he graciously tendered them, were designed for our consolation and hope.

On the last Lord's day your attention was directed to the parable of " the barren fig-tree." I endeavored to improve that portion of scripture for alarming the sinner in Zion ; for exhibiting that destruction which, without repentence on his part, must unavoidably overtake him ; I attempted, also, to shew to the congregation, in a social capacity, the danger of misimproving their privileges ; it was noticed that the Lord God, in his righteous displeasure, sometimes unchurches a congregation at once, " removes the candlestick" out of his place, and leaves them without " vision, without sacrifice, and without teraphim." Such were his judgments upon the Jews ; such, afterwards, were his judgments upon Sardis, upon Laodecea, and the other churches in lesser Asia. My design in selecting these verses is to aim at displaying the abundant riches of divine mercy, and, if possible, to encourage you as individuals and as a congregation to yield yourselves up to the Lord by entering into his covenant.

" I will heal their backslidings." To backslide, in the literal sense of the word, is to slip or glide from some point to which

we have attained ; as used in scripture, it generally signifies to come short of some resolution which we have solemnly made, or some obligation which we are reasonably bound to fulfil, and is only chargeable upon a professing person or people. The heathen, or those who have been uniformly opposed to the Saviour's cross, cannot be guilty of backsliding, because they have nothing to lose ; having never attained to any thing in the church of the living God, there is nothing either in principle or profession from which they can depart. But *they* are chargeable with backsliding who were early surrendered to God in baptism, who were thus brought into the communion of his church, or who join themselves to the Lord by an open profession of his name, and afterwards walk unworthy of this profession ; who renounce any thing either in doctrine or practice to which they had attained.—Such was the condition of the Jews to whom this prophecy was delivered, and such is the condition of thousands who once possessed a name in the visible church. “The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches,” the temptations of “the evil one,” all combining with their own corruptions, lead them “aside from the holy commandment: With these they become more and more entangled to the loss of their peace in time, and of their souls for ever. “Demas hath forsaken me,” says the apostle, “having loved this present world :” “They that will be rich

fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.”

Brethren, are there any such in this congregation? Any, who by an increasing attachment to the profits or pleasures or preferments of this world, are gradually departing from God; are becoming more remiss in the duties of the closet, or family, or sanctuary? Let such be entreated to embrace, without delay, the gracious promise, “I will heal your backslidings.” The original word which we translate *heal*, literally signifies to cure as a physician; to remove some bodily disease, and restore to health and vigor a broken constitution. “Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy Father,” to king Hezekiah, “I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears; behold I will heal thee; on the third day thou shalt go up to the house of the Lord.” In the present and many other instances this word is applied to the diseases of the soul, and signifies their complete removal. David celebrates the praises of Jehovah “who forgave all his iniquities; who healed all his diseases; who crowned” him “with loving kindness and tender mercies.” The promise here made to the church is most comprehensive in its nature; “I will heal their backslidings, I will graciously pardon the guilt which they have contracted in departing from me; I will be merciful to this their unrighteousness, this sin and iniquity I will remember no more.”

The remission of sin through the blood of the cross is a leading blessing of the everlasting covenant, and is introductory to all other blessings. The happy subject then enjoys a complete acquittal from his past and present transgressions, a perfect discharge from that curse of the law under which he formerly groaned, an eternal redemption from that wrath of which he was justly an heir, and a title, a legal, unalienable title to future glory and happiness.—“Being justified by his grace, we are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” But the promise comprehends more than merely the pardon of their former offences; it also includes their sanctification, or the mortification of those lusts by which they might be exposed to future apostacies. “I will heal their backslidings, I will not only forgive those crimes with which they have been formerly chargeable, but will powerfully subdue those corruptions by which they might hereafter be estranged from me; I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes, and they shall keep my judgments and do them. Then shall they remember their own evil ways and their doings that were not good, and shall loathe themselves in their own sight, for their iniquities and for their abominations.” Whom Jehovah pardons he also purifies; he convinces them by his word and Spirit, that it is an evil and a bitter thing that they have departed from him; he ex-

cites in them an abhorrence of all sin, and particularly an abhorrence of those sins with which in times past they have "been most easily beset." "Ephraim," who was formerly "joined to his idols," shall afterwards exclaim with a holy indignation, "what have I to do any more with idols?" And David, after he was brought to a consciousness of his guilt in the murder of Uriah, fervently expostulates, "deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation;" although he was solicitous to be restrained from all sin, he appeared peculiarly solicitous to be restrained from a repetition of that crime by which he lately dishonored God, gave occasion to the enemies of his cause to blaspheme, and disturbed his own spiritual peace.

The person making this promise is God the Father; although in the remission of human guilt there is a distant act of the EVER BLESSED THREE: The Son "brings in everlasting righteousness," and renders our restoration to the divine favor consistent with each divine perfection: The Holy Spirit works faith in the sinner's heart, enabling him to improve this righteousness, cordially to embrace it as freely presented in the gospel; yet the formal act of our justification at first, and of the remission of our daily imperfections, belongs peculiarly to the Father. He vindicated the honors of justice, declaring that "without shedding of blood there" should be "no remission;" demand-

ing that a full reparation be made to the injured glories of the divine government before the rebel be admitted to favor; and the Father actually pardons in consequence of this satisfaction. "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?"

It may be remarked here, that the restoration of a backsliding people is really pleasing and glorifying to God. Does the fond parent delight in the return of a disobedient, prodigal son; are his bowels moved within him when he beholds the penitential tear burst from his eyes, or hears the unfeigned acknowledgments of regret for his former misbehaviour; does he run, does he embrace him, does he afford every possible expression of good will towards him, and cordiality in receiving him? Inconceivably more cordial is the everlasting Father in receiving the apostate child who returns through the mediation of Jesus Christ.— "Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will return unto you saith the Lord of hosts: Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you, saith the Lord." He does not merely invite them back to himself, but he scatters every mountain of opposition that intervenes; he answers every objection which might tend to discourage; "I will heal your backslidings; when you have multiplied to transgress I will multiply to pardon; all your former disobedience, your breach of resolutions the most deliberate and solemn, your present unworthiness.

are no obstacles on my part, and they need be no discouragement on yours. Behold, I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed you."

Are any despondently replying, "where-with shall I come before the Lord? I am ashamed to look up to a Father whom I have so frequently and wantonly offended; I have no plea which I can mention as a reason why the Lord should receive me who am chargeable with shameful and repeated departures;" he adds "I will love you freely." The love here mentioned does not so properly imply this attribute or perfection of God, as the egress or expression of this perfection to his people. Considered in the former sense the love of God is invariable; he as really loves the child of adoption when he frowns as when he smiles; when he scourges him with scorpions, as when he refreshes with his consolations.— "I have loved you with an everlasting," unchanging "love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you." The promise here delivered by the prophet secures that Jehovah who had long been visiting Israel in wrath would speedily return to them in manifestations of mercy; that the night of adversity in which as a nation they had been enveloped should be shortly succeeded by a morning of prosperity, and their present sorrow should terminate in joy. I cannot pass unnoticed the sovereignty with which

this promise is expressed, "I will love you **FREELY**;" "It is not to reward any worth, or compliment any excellence in you, but to magnify the freedom and immensity of my own goodness. Not for your sakes do I this, be it known unto you, O house of Israel, but for mine own name's sake."—All the blessings which a covenant God dispenses, he dispenses *freely*; does he justify the ungodly? "it is freely of grace through the redemption which is in Christ;" does he raise to life the spiritually dead? "it is according to his mercy; out of his abundant goodness they are begotten again:" does he bestow the adoption of children to the alien? this favor is shown to "the praise of the riches of the glory of his grace;" does he visit an individual, or a church, or a nation with a season of refreshing after they have been apparently rejected or forgotten? "these things are freely given of God."—The word *freely* probably expresses, not only the communication of blessings without merit on their part, but also the abundant measures in which they should be dispensed; "I will love you **FREELY**; I will manifest my favor with a bounty becoming a God; where sin has abounded on your part in backsliding and departing from me, my mercy shall much more abound in passing by your transgressions, and imparting every blessing which your necessities can require; my grace, like an overflowing river or mighty stream, shall surmount every obstacle which

your iniquities have thrown in the way ; I will do for you exceedingly abundantly, not only beyond what you deserve, but also beyond what you can either ask or think."

The love of Jehovah must be exercised in a manner consistent with the honor of his other perfections ; the demands of his justice must be answered ; the injuries of his law must be repaired before mercy can be manifested to a guilty world ; he therefore adds, "for mine anger is turned away from him." To consider "anger" when ascribed to God as that hasty, unreasonable, uncontrolled passion which agitates the bosom of mortals, would be equally absurd and blasphemous ; "he beholds the end from the beginning," he foresees every event which can possibly occur either in time or eternity, and therefore can never be taken on surprize ; he is a being essentially perfect, and therefore infinitely remote from that caprice by which mortals are governed ; but anger when ascribed to Deity signifies his righteous displeasure against sin, his necessary abhorrence of it as contrary to his perfections, as inconsistent with the moral beauty of his creation, and a holy, deliberate, unalterable determination to punish it : the removal of his anger, therefore, can take place only in consequence of ample satisfaction both to his law and justice. "The anger of the Lord was turned away" from the objects of mercy at the death of his eternal Son in their room ; that blood which flowed

from his cross washed away the guilt of a chosen world. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect; it is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again." Those lightnings of divine wrath which threatened their destruction exhausted all their terrors upon the soul of the Surety; peace and good will are therefore proclaimed to them—"For by one offering," says the apostle, "he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." The anger of Jehovah is turned away from the individual, at the moment of his union to Jesus and acceptance of his covenant righteousness; no sooner does the sinner improve by faith the obedience and blood of the gracious Immanuel than a sentence of justification is passed in his favor; the Lord God who formerly denounced "indignation and wrath" against his crimes becomes "pacified towards" him; pronounces him perfectly "accepted in the beloved," and gives him the most inviolable security to future happiness and glory. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. He is no longer a stranger or foreigner but a fellow citizen with the saints and of the household of God." "The" divine "anger is turned" from a guilty, backsliding people when they return in the lively exercises of faith and humiliation. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake a-

gainst him, I do earnestly remember him still ; therefore my bowels are troubled for him ; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

We learn from this passage, that in the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, there is encouragement for the chief of sinners, for the most undeserving, the most hell-deserving to return and live : former iniquities however enormous, present unworthiness however great are no objection on the part of Jehovah ; they are no obstacle to interrupt the egress of his mercy ; the insignificance, the abominations of the creature only serve to heighten the glories of his grace in their forgiveness and salvation. " Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; let him turn unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon him." We may frequently notice the greatest unworthiness, the most aggravated crimes on the part of man, connected with the most rich, unconditional tenders of spiritual and immortal blessings. " Though ye have lain among the pots : " although ye have been debased by the foulest abominations of the flesh and spirit, " yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."— Again, Israel's God complains, " thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob ; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel ; thou hast made me serve with thy sins ; thou hast wearied

me with thine iniquities;" the heaviest charges are there uttered against this favored people; crimes multiplied in number, and aggravated in their circumstances; they are accused of omitting a duty the most reasonable and important; "thou hast not called upon me, whose favor is life," whose loving kindness constitutes your happiness as individuals, and your glory as a nation; thou hast been weary of me, by whom you have been exalted above all kindreds of the earth with every blessing both temporal and spiritual: But what is the consequence? Does a righteous God doom them to despair, and threaten to heap upon them the reward of their transgressions? No; in the plentitude of his grace he immediately adds, "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own name's sake, and will not remember thy sins."

In the fifth verse the Lord God gives to his church the assurance of a speedy return and an abundant refreshing. "I will be as the dew unto Israel." There are no objects in nature by which the influence of the Holy Ghost are more frequently represented than the rain and the dew. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs." The natural dew descends imperceptibly; the eye of mortals cannot discover the *treasures* from which its drops are derived, nor trace their

passage to the earth ; their effect is obvious in renewing the withered creation, but the manner is altogether unknown. The dew, in this respect, is a lively emblem of the divine Spirit in his operations. Although his effect on the souls of his people is obvious, enlivening them when dead, enlarging them when distressed, exciting within them holy and heavenly dispositions, yet the peculiar manner in which he produces this effect is utterly unaccountable. " Who hath known the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him. The wind bloweth where it listeth and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The workings of this almighty Agent in bringing home the law for convincing of sin, and the gospel for imparting peace and consolation we can no more conceive than the natural eye can discern the drops of the morning dew. Again, the particles of dew, although small and imperceptible, are most refreshing in their tendency ; they renew the face of nature when decayed ; give a fresh bloom to the grass, cause the rose to expand its leaves and the lily to diffuse its fragrance. The dew, in this respect, most happily represents the everlasting Spirit in his effects ; the moment that his influences descend, how is the spiritual creation refreshed and revived ? All the graces of his people, which were formerly withered and drooping, " flourish as an

herb" under the genial dew ; their smell is fragrant " as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed," and comes up with acceptance to God through Jesus Christ. Again, the drops of dew are inexhaustible, the treasures from which they flow are not diminished by communication. The dew, for this reason, is a natural and encouraging emblem of the gracious Spirit. Although his influences have long been descending for the sanctification and support of his church, the source from which they flow is neither exhausted nor lessened ; they are as copious this day for the revival of Zion at large, as when they rested in such plenteous effusion at the feast of pentecost, or for the conversion of thousands under the preaching of Peter ; they are as free, and abundant this hour for thine establishment and enlargement, christian, as when they early descended upon an Abel or an Enoch, enabling them " to walk with God. I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground ; I will cause the shower to come down in his season ; there shall be showers of blessing."

It may be here remarked that the Lord God is a liberal giver ; he delights in opening the treasures of his covenant and dispensing plenteously to the wants of his people. He not only " heals their backslidings, blots out their transgressions as a thick cloud," giving them the free and eternal remission of their trespasses, but descends as the dew

upon their souls, and refreshes them with the consolations of his covenant ; gives them occasional pledges of “ that fulness of joy,” of those endless “ pleasures which are at his right hand ; he sympathizes with them under all their distresses ; supports under all their difficulties, and “ gives them everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,” amidst all the discouragements of their earthly pilgrimage. “ The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty ; he will save ; he will rejoice over thee with joy ; he will rest in his love ; he will joy over them with singing.” When the christian is straightened, he is not straightened in Jehovah, in his promises, his covenant, his all-sufficiency or willingness to bestow ; but he is straightened in himself, in his own indolence and unbelief. “ If he receives not,” it is “ because he asks not ;” for his covenant God, “ is able to do for him exceeding abundantly beyond what he can either ask or think ;” his grace is a fountain ever flowing, overflowing and he is glorified in communicating. “ When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them ; I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the vallies ; I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.”

“ He shall grow.” This is the effect immediately produced by the descent of the

Holy Ghost in his influences. The herb does not more naturally revive and flourish under the softening showers of heaven, than the church of the living God under the communications of his grace. "They spring up as among the grass and as willows by the water courses. The wilderness then becomes a fruitful field; the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord," are clothed with new verdure and beauty; they present their blossoms and fruit in due season. How are the souls of the redeemed gladdened under the light of their Father's countenance; they are inflamed with more ardent love to God and more fervent concern for his glory; their conversation becomes more spiritual and edifying; in short, "they mount up with wings as eagles; they run and are not weary, they walk and are not faint." The christian's growth is compared to that of *the lily*. Lilies abounded much in the land of Canaan, and are represented by naturalists as a flower equally beautiful to the sight and fragrant to the smell. Our Redeemer speaking of the lily remarks "that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them." The church and the particular christian are probably compared to the lily in order to express their real beauty and excellence; to shew that however insignificant in their own esteem, or contemptible in the esteem of the world, they are really glorious in the eyes of angels and of God. Clothed with "lin-

en clean and white," even the righteousness of Jesus their substitute, and adorned internally with the beauties of holiness, they are pronounced ALL-FAIR and UNDEFILED; "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." "The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold."

"And cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Almost every object in the natural, is employed to represent something in the spiritual world. The grass which grows in the field, the rose as it opens in the garden, and the cedar which towers aloft on the mountain, all point out, in their turn, the christian's progress towards perfection. In the former part of this verse he was represented as "growing like the lily;" mounting upward in ardor of affection, in heavenliness of thought, and spirituality of conversation; rising in frequent and fervent longings after God as his consolation and glory; but the believer's stability does not depend so much on the warmth of his affections, or any outward attainments, as on a downward growth in humility and self-denial. He is therefore said "to cast forth his roots as Lebanon," or as the cedars "of Lebanon." Lebanon was a mountain situated to the north of Judea, and its cedars were generally known through the eastern world; this tree was distinguished not only by the grandeur of its appearance, but also for solidity and strength. It is therefore represented as a high display of Jehovah's power that his

“voice breaketh the cedars, yea the cedars of Lebanon.” The solidity of the cedar, however, did not depend on its towering height or wide spread branches, but rather on the depth of its roots in the earth ; thus the christian’s safety depends not on the splendor of his gifts, on the ardor of his feelings or frames, but rather on his being “rooted and grounded” in Christ Jesus. “He that trusteth on the Lord is like mount Zion which can never be moved. The professor whose growth consists in lively feelings, or empty speculation, like a ship without ballast, or a building without foundation, or a tree without roots, is liable to be overthrown by the first storm of temptation or persecution. There is one circumstance which it may not be unprofitable to mention on this part of the verse ; the growth of the roots is unseen ; its progress in striking deeper and wider through the earth is unnoticed, yet the tree is gradually acquiring greater strength and prepared for resisting every outward shock. This remark, if duly realized, would tend to quiet the fears of many exercised souls. They feel not that enlargement in spiritual exercises ; that liberty in prayer ; that fervor in meditation ; that delight in religious company and conversation ; that “joy in God through the Lord Jesus Christ” which they once experienced ; they are afraid, therefore, that they “have lost their first love ;” that they are going backwards in the divine life, if not altogether re-

probates. But let me ask thee, disconsolate christian, art thou deploring thy spiritual barrenness? art thou more and more convinced that thy "heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked?" art thou gradually taught the necessity of lying at the feet of Jesus, and depending on him daily as thy "wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption?" Then I call upon thee not "to sorrow as those who have no hope;" thou art now "casting forth thy roots as Lebanon;" thou art becoming more immovably established in the offices of Christ, in the promises of the gospel, in the everlasting covenant, and thus prepared for sustaining every outward trial. Perhaps the christian never grows so rapidly as when in his own opinion he is not growing at all; although he may be sinking in his own esteem, he is rising in the divine esteem, by "putting on that ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price."

It may be remarked, on this part of the verse, that the believer's increase in holiness and advancement to perfection is infallibly sure. He may be liable to interruptions in his spiritual course. The natural world frequently appears decayed and barren; its growth is checked alternately by the parching drought of summer and the chilling blast of winter. The spiritual world also experiences its inconveniences and injuries; "the trees of righteousness" suffer in turn from

the summer's drought and the winter's frost; sometimes the refreshing influences of the Spirit are restrained and "the heavens over them become as brass;" again, the chilling blasts of affliction, of temptation, and persecution pass along, their fruit then begins to languish, their leaves to decay, and their usual bloom is in a great measure lost. But this interruption is only for a season. "Their paths shall again drop down fatness;" the sun of righteousness shall revisit them with his cheering rays, and these "trees of God" shall appear "fat and flourishing." Sooner shall the laws of nature be dissolved; sooner shall the dews of the morning cease to descend, or the clouds to pour down their rain; sooner shall the sun cease to roll in his orbit, giving light to the world; than a promise of the divine word fail of its accomplishment. Yea, christian, all these changes, however awful, shall take place, but the love of thy promising, covenanting God shall remain unchanged, eternally unchangeable. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee," merely for the trial of thy patience and to shew thee that this world is not thy heaven, "but with great mercies will I gather thee: In a little wrath," as a correction for thy spiritual indolence or shameful unbelief, "I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee." With these promises before thine eyes, promises firmer than the everlasting hills, more immovable

than the pillars of nature, hang thy harp no longer upon the willow ; lift up thine head with exceeding joy, for behold thy redemption draweth nigh. "Thou shalt grow as the lily ; thou shalt cast forth thy roots as the cedars of Lebanon," until thou art transplanted into a better soil, a more healthful clime, even the heavenly paradise, there to flourish in unfading bloom.

"His branches shall spread." This promise or prophecy may also be considered as referring to the particular christian, and forming a greater security for his progress to perfection ; but it more probably respects the church in general, and secures her perpetuity and prosperity. The *branches* of Zion literally spread, when her boundaries are enlarged ; when individuals and families and nations are converted to the faith of the gospel. This promise was partly accomplished in the earlier ages of christianity, particularly in the effusion of the Holy Ghost after the ascension of our Lord.— "The word of God grew mightily and prevailed : " The sacred leaven diffused its influence from heart to heart ; from settlement to settlement ; from nation to nation. "The earth was made to bring forth in one day, and a nation was born at once ; for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." The apostles, armed with power from on high, "went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs follow-

ing." This promise shall receive a more illustrious accomplishment in "the glory of the latter day." "The branches" of Zion shall eminently *spread* when the Jews shall return to the Messiah, doing homage to him as their Saviour and Lord ; when "the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in," and the whole earth shall be full of his glory.

"And his beauty shall be as the olive tree." Natural historians have related little respecting this species of tree, yet there are frequent allusions to it in the inspired records. So far as we can learn from sacred history, it was distinguished by an almost perpetual verdure ; also by the excellence and abundance of the oil which it produced. Israel, in the day of her purity and glory, was pronounced "a green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit." Zachariah represents the "two olive trees as standing upon the right and left side of the candlestick," supplying it with oil ; and in the parable delivered by Jotham, the olive tree is introduced as asking, "should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man?" The righteous are probably compared to the *olive tree*, to shew that their spiritual beauty is unfading ; covered with the righteousness of Jesus Jehovah, as with a robe, they are altogether *comely*, eternally glorious in the eyes of God ; and supplied with oil from the Spirit of holiness they continue "fat and flourishing ;" they are "filled with those fruits of righteousness which are by

Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.' Their beauty is not precarious like the flower of the field which is suddenly blighted and withered, but like the olive they are ever green. In prosperity they are thankful and joyous ; in adversity they are patient and resigned. " They glory in tribulations also ; knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience experience, and experience hope."

" And his smell as Lebanon." The nations of the east conversed almost universally in figure ; the imagination of the speaker, seizing some outward object, employed it for illustrating or enforcing the truth which he delivered. This prophet of the Lord, conforming to general custom, communicates his message chiefly in metaphor. He represents the christian as growing like " the lily, and casting forth his roots as Lebanon ;" he compares his beauty to that of the olive tree, and in this part of the verse, his " smell to Lebanon." By his smell are intended his outward deportment and conversation. As Lebanon, refreshed with the rain or the dews of heaven, diffused a delightful flavor through the neighboring country, so the christian cherished by the influences of the Holy Ghost, abounds in every good work ; his conduct and discourse are fragrant to the spiritual senses of each beholder ; they prove " an odor of sweet smell," acceptable to God, and profitable to men.

I cannot dismiss these verses without briefly applying them as the source of encouragement under our own peculiar circumstances. Beloved brethren, are we not chargeable with backsliding in our holy profession? As individuals have we not "come short of the glory of God?" In our baptism we were solemnly surrendered to Jehovah, we then became engaged to be for him, and not for another, to redeem our time and our talents in the advancement of his praise; but have we not shamefully failed in performing these vows? As families are we not verily guilty before God? Have we been "exhorting each other" with an earnestness becoming the intimacy of our relation as husbands and wives; as parents and children; as masters and servants; as brethren and sisters? Have we been "forbearing" with the imperfections of "each other in love," and thus living together "as heirs of the grace of life? Are we not chargeable, as a congregation, with misimproving our merciful day? We have not attended to the ordinances of the sanctuary with a solemnity, and affection becoming the majesty of their Author, or a due concern for our own spiritual welfare, which they are intended to promote. Have we sat under the ministry of reconciliation with a becoming faith, and love, and gratitude, receiving the message not "as the word of man, but of the living God?—What, brethren, should be our exercises under this consciousness of guilt?

Are we doomed to sink down in despair? "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then" should not our "health" as a people "be recovered?" Must we resume the plaintive, despondent language of the Old Testament church when forsaken of her God, "hast thou utterly rejected Judah? Hath thy soul loathed Zion? Why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us?" Glory to God, there is yet hope in Israel concerning our condition. The Lord God whom we have offended "waits that he may be gracious, he will be exalted that he may have mercy." He is, this day, affectionately entreating, "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God." He answers all doubts, he removes all discouragements with the most gracious promise, "I will heal your backslidings, I will love you freely, for mine anger is turned away from him." Have the "heavens over us been as brass," and the genial dews, the influence of the Holy Ghost, been restrained? He is encouraging us with that declaration of love, "I will be as the dew unto Israel, and he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." O brethren, are not these promises full of grace on the part of Jehovah? Are they not rich with consolation to us? Are they not worthy of our immediate, our most cordial acceptance as individuals, and as a society? They are all in Jesus Christ, "yea, and in him amen," infallibly sure, "unto the glory of God by us;" let the heart, therefore, of

every one be stirred up thankfully to embrace them, and cordially to rejoice in them. The Lord God is my witness that I would willingly "espouse" you all this day "to one husband, that I may present you as chaste virgins to Christ." Were you constrained by omnipotent grace to acquiesce in the offered terms, how glorious would be the occasion? Is "there joy in heaven" at the conversion of a single sinner, what would be the transports of its blessed inhabitants, was a whole congregation returning and "lamenting after the Lord?" How rapturously would holy angels mingle in the general triumph, and record that "this man and that man was born therein. Come, brethren, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."—AMEN and AMEN.

THE
SPIRITUAL STEWARD:

A
SERMON,

PREACHED IN NEW-YORK, OCTOBER 21, 1802, BEFORE THE
GENERAL SYNOD.

VOL. 4.

W

PREFACE.

THE following discourse, with a few additions and alterations, makes its appearance from the press precisely as it was delivered from the pulpit. It would be vanity the most inexcusable in the author, to affect throwing any light on the duties of the ministerial office, which have been so frequently and fully discussed by persons of maturer age, of greater experience, and whose situation in life opens larger sources of information on this and every other subject. In the providence of God, however, he was called to preach on that public occasion, and at the repeated request of some, whose judgment he ought to respect, he offers the sermon to the world. The author trusts, that it may occasionally serve at least as a monitor to himself, and through the blessing of that sovereign God, who makes foolish things to confound the wise, and weak things to confound the mighty, may not be altogether unprofitable to fellow laborers in the vineyard of Jehovah.

All who are in the least degree versed in the history of the church ; who are acquainted with her prosperities and adversities, and the causes which produced them, must be impressed with the unutterable importance of her ministry. On the prudence of the ambassadors of Jesus, their patience, their self-denial, their fervent zeal, their deep acquaintance with the mysteries of the king-

dom, and their holy heroism in defending them, depend intimately, under God, the success and the glory of christianity. They are in scripture emphatically represented under the emblem of *stars*; and if they are obscured, either by ignorance or error, a general darkness must envelope the horizon of the church. Natural talents and human learning are little noticed in the following character of the gospel steward; because however important these qualifications are, they are of inferior importance; they become useful and ornamental, precisely in proportion as they are sanctified by the Spirit of Jesus, and consecrated to the service of his cross. If those who "bear the vessels" of the Lord be erroneous, the more successful they are, the more dangerous, by rendering others two fold more the children of darkness than formerly. If they appear indolent and indifferent, their example fosters carelessness in their hearers, and tends to lull them deeper and deeper in the slumbers of perdition. The ordinary pastor, no less than the extraordinary apostle, should be possess "all knowledge and all mysteries," yet without charity, must become "as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal." Intellectual endowments, unaccompanied by divine grace, like the blazing comet, may dazzle and astonish, while he who "endures all things for the elect's sake," like the sun in the firmament, exhilarates and cherishes as he shines.

If the present discourse is made instrumental in impressing a single ambassador of Jesus with more becoming conceptions of the importance of his office, or of awakening one to greater industry and importunity in discharging the duties of his office, the author will consider himself more than rewarded; and would now and eternally ascribe all to the glory of that sovereignty, which out of "the mouth of babes and sucklings" has perfected strength.

SALEM, DEG. 24, 1802.

VOL. 4.

W. 2.

THE
SPIRITUAL STEWARD.

I COR. IV. I.

Stewards of the mysteries of God.

THE grace and sovereignty of Jehovah illustriously shine in the redemption of man through the cross of Immanuel. It is a manifestation of grace the most astonishing and glorious, that any of our family should be restored: that after our wilful apostacy from the government of God, and rebellion against his crown, we should be reinstated in his favor, and dignified with the name, and distinguished with the inheritance of sons. It excites admiration in the highest, that our recovery should be accomplished by a plan so peculiar, a scheme so costly, as the substitution and death of his "only begotten," eternally "beloved Son." "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Sovereignty also mingles her glories with those of grace, in every part of this wondrous dispensation. While grace displays her exceeding riches in the salvation of any, sovereignty shines mysterious and awful in determining the objects of this salvation; in choosing some to adoption, and reconciliation, and eternal life, while others of the

same nation, of the same society, of the same family, under the same opportunities of instruction; and the same offers of mercy, are utterly passed by; are delivered up to "blindness of mind," and a rejection of Jesus, the only sacrifice for sin.

The Lord God appears no less an adorable Sovereign, in the very instruments by which this redemption is applied to "the election of grace." Whom does he usually raise up and employ for this important purpose? Does he fasten upon the unerring angels, those exalted spirits who bask in the glories of his throne, whose larger capacities qualify them for understanding more fully, and unfolding more perfectly the mysteries of redemption? No; their apostate tribes are not chosen to be the blessed partakers of this salvation, neither are their unerring tribes honored to be instrumental in applying it. What rank of the human "family" is ordinarily employed for promoting the kingdom of "Jesus," and applying to the souls of others the atonement of his cross? Does the living God raise up some preternatural order, persons superior to their fellow-creatures, naturally distinguished by purer morals, by a more comprehensive understanding or commanding utterance? No; was this the plan pursued, the success of the gospel would probably be ascribed to the excellence of the instruments employed.—The vessel naturally most frail, most foul, debased by every species of abomination,

has frequently been purified, and appointed to contain this immortal treasure. "Base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen,—that no flesh should glory in his presence." He ordinarily uses instruments the most insignificant, seemingly the most unequal to the work, that his own wisdom, and power, and sovereignty, may more visibly be traced in every part of the dispensation. A few fishermen, persons of low occupation in life, unlearned in the sciences, and unskilled in the policies of this world, were selected as the usual companions of our Lord; and their preaching, afterwards, was the great engine of spreading his gospel among the nations of the earth. Saul, once a malignant "persecutor," a man "injurious" to the Redeemer's cause, who had uttered the foulest blasphemies against his cross; this very Saul is converted, and rendered the chief apostle of this very cross; glories in it as his only salvation; proclaims it as the only hope of perishing sinners. "We have this treasure," he exclaims, adoring equally the depth of divine condescension and sovereignty—"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are stewards of the mysteries of God."

The term *mysteries* frequently occurs in the volume of divine inspiration. Without inquiring particularly into its real origin, or usual signification, it may be sufficient to

remark, that *mysteries*, as employed in the sacred oracles, generally imply those truths which our reason, unassisted by revelation, could never have discovered ; and which, after they are revealed, our finite, contracted understandings, are incapable fully to comprehend. The mysteries committed to the ministers of reconciliation are the everlasting gospel ; all those doctrines, all that discipline ; those seals of the covenant also, which are employed by the great Head of the church, for the instruction, and correction, and edification of his spiritual household.

The persons entrusted with these mysteries are denominated "stewards." There is an evident allusion to a practice which prevailed in early periods of the world ; particularly in the families of the opulent and honorable. A person of known integrity and talents was chosen, to whom, under the character of a "steward," the proprietor of the house committed the immediate disposal of his goods, and management of his family ; accountable, however, in all respects, to him by whom he was appointed to this stewardship. We read in sacred history of a "steward" in the family of Abraham, in the family of Joseph, and in the families of particular kings of Israel and Chaldaea. This character is frequently applied to the ministers of reconciliation, and expresses the great importance and awful responsibility of their office. By Jesus Jeho-

rah, the supreme Ruler and Lawgiver of the divine house, they are now entrusted with the treasure of the gospel. This they are required to dispense to his family on earth, as they must answer hereafter, "at his appearing and kingdom."

The suitability of this subject to the present occasion is abundantly obvious.—We are ordinarily employed in illustrating and enforcing the duty of others as men : It is more appropriate, at present, to illustrate and apply our own obligations as ministers. May the unction of the Holy One liberally descend, and influence every heart, while we attempt—

I. To enumerate a few of those mysteries which are contained in the gospel : And,

II. Illustrate the character and obligations of those to whom these mysteries are entrusted : "Stewards—stewards of the mysteries of God."

1. The Trinity in Jehovah may be numbered among the mysteries of the gospel : Three Persons, necessarily, essentially, eternally "equal;"—ONE in essence, ONE in perfection and glory. This doctrine was revealed obscurely in the Old Testament, but is taught with greater perspicuity and glory in the New. The apostle speaks of "the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." An evangelist announces, that "there be three which bare record in heaven ; the Father, and the Word, and the Holy Ghost : These three are one." This

truth is taught, not barely as a subject of speculation to the understanding, but a source of rich, unutterable consolation to the heart. The believer in Jesus is privileged to enjoy real distinct communion with each of the Co-Equal Three: with the Father in his love; with the Son in his grace; and with the Spirit in his sanctifying, comforting influences. It constitutes the privilege, and security, and glory of each heir of salvation, that he is "elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;" and that once elected, and sanctified, and justified, he shall be infallibly and everlastingly glorified.

2. The incarnation of the Eternal Son is another mystery of the glorious gospel.— "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God manifested in the flesh." His appearing in our nature, appropriating our guilt, suffering in our room, bringing in everlasting righteousness for our reconciliation, form an essential, and most interesting part of that heavenly treasure committed to our trust; and ought to constitute "the alpha and omega" of every administration, whether public or private.—From Jesus and his cross, all the revelation of God derives its meaning, and value, and glory. There the law of Moses with its costly observances, the predictions of prophets, and the preaching of apostles, all

meet, as their common centre. For Messiah's appearance in the flesh, and his accomplishment of our redemption, believers under the Old Testament looked forward with anxious expectation; and to these events the ransomed, through eternity, will look back with adoring gratitude: They will be ever acknowledging his "decease, accomplished at Jerusalem," as the foundation of all they expected on earth, and all they experience in heaven. In Christ, and him crucified, all the perfections of Deity are glorified to the very uttermost: The law is magnified in its precept, and vindicated in its penalty; the injuries of justice repaired; the offence of holiness removed; while mercy, grace and condescension shine forth with unparalleled lustre. Through Christ, and him crucified, all the wants of the sinner are supplied. By the blood of his covenant, sprinkled upon the conscience, the vilest of the vile "are purged from dead works:" Through his righteousness imputed, they are completely and eternally justified in the sight of Jehovah; and by his grace, shed abroad through their hearts, they are sanctified and prepared for the inheritance of immortality. So important, and glorious is this mystery, the Son of God incarnate and suffering for our sins, that patriarchs "rejoiced," leaped up, "to see his day afar off;" prophets inquired diligently, who "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow;"

apostles determined to know "nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" angels look into it, with ever increasing admiration, and delight.

3. The regeneration and sanctification of the sinner, by the divine Spirit, is another mystery with which, as stewards in the family of Jesus, we are entrusted. The apostle therefore pronounces it not only a "mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh," but "believed on in the world," and speaks in another epistle of the "mystery of faith." This grace, which unites the sinner to the Saviour, and interests him in the "great salvation," is effected in a manner utterly inconceivable to us. Although the change produced in the soul, at its translation from death to life, is obvious; new fears, new desires, new joys, new hopes, instantly springing up; yet the manner by which this change is produced is altogether mysterious, and unsearchable by us. "The wind bloweth where it listeth; we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Who can conceive or describe that gracious influence, by which the understanding, once dark, is now enlightened; the will, once stubborn, is now subdued "to the obedience of faith;" the affections, formerly sensual and earthly, are now elevated to things spiritual and divine; the whole man transformed, and translated from death to life, from corruption to holi-

ness, from things temporal to things eternal. The believer himself, although the favored subject of this sanctifying Spirit, is unable to trace the manner of his operations. He can, however, maintain, and maintain with a confidence, which all the sophistry of earth or hell shall never be able to overthrow, "whereas I was blind, now I see." I discover new excellencies and glories in the Saviour, new wisdom and condescension in the method of reconciliation through his obedience and blood, new sweetness and preciousness in the promises, new suitableness and sufficiency in the everlasting covenant. These are "all my salvation, and all my desire."

4. To these we may add, the resurrection of the body; the awards of the general judgment; the adjudication of the righteous to endless life, and of the wicked to endless perdition, as other mysteries of the gospel committed to our charge. The manner by which the resurrection from the dead will be effected; the particular body in which they shall appear; the part of the universe where all the nations, when raised, shall be placed; the procedure of the Judge in determining their unalterable doom; the instrumentality of elect angels in raising the dead, in arranging them for judgment, in conducting the righteous to mansions of bliss, and hurrying down the damned to the abodes of despair, are inconceivable to us. "Behold," says the apostle, "I shew you a mystery :

We shall not all sleep ; but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed : For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

These are a part of those mysteries with which, as stewards of the kingdom, we are solemnly entrusted. These it becomes us to dispense, without reserve, or partiality, or hypocrisy, to that house over which the " Holy Ghost hath made us overseers."

Having attempted briefly to enumerate these mysteries, we proceed—

II. To illustrate the character and obligation of those to whom they are committed : " Stewards—stewards of the mysteries of God."

1. The steward is freely elected and appointed to his office by the proprietor of the house. He who daringly rushes into the family of another, and takes possession of his property without a regular invitation, is chargeable equally with presumption and folly ; he can neither ask the present support of his master, nor afterwards expect a reward from his hand. Equally necessary is it that the minister of reconciliation be divinely chosen to that office ; that he be duly called by Jesus Jehovah, the great Master of the spiritual house. No emergence of the church, however peculiar ; no necessity for laborers, however pressing ; no ad-

vantages arising from natural talents, from the aids of education or other considerations, can justify any in assuming the ministerial office, unless lawfully called. The sovereign Lord of the house, jealous of his royal prerogatives, meets the intruder with that heart-rending challenge—"who hath required this at your hand?" and writes his presumption in his punishment—"I have not sent him nor commanded him: Therefore he shall not profit this people at all. No man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Let us pause a moment, and impartially inquire, are we sent and appointed of the Lord God to this stewardship? Have we been careful to make *sure* our *calling and election*, not only as men, but as ministers? This question intimately concerns the glory of that Jesus whom we serve; the dignity of that cause in which we are embarked; the edification of that church which we are appointed to oversee; our own peace, and confidence, and triumph as individuals. How would it support in the hour of difficulty; how would it embolden in the discharge of every duty, could we carry our commission in our hand, and with the prophet confidently proclaim—"the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me." Then might we *daily* look up to our Master for strength proportioned to our *daily* cross, and expect his blessing on those labors which we perform in obedience to his command.

A full, formal inquiry, into the nature of

this call to the ministerial office, is not intended at present. It may not, however, be impertinent to remark, that he who is divinely chosen to this work, will experience the love of the compassionate, bleeding Saviour kindling in his heart. He will feel this heavenly flame burning up the dross of self-ease, self-interest, self-promotion. He will be constrained, by a holy, an irresistible necessity, "to preach the gospel; to spend, and to be spent;" to occupy his time, his talents in promoting the kingdom of that Jesus who bought us with his blood. His bosom will occasionally melt with tender compassion towards his brethren by nature who are in danger of perishing eternally. He will cheerfully renounce each worldly prospect, his temporal ease and indulgence, nay, life itself, to become instrumental in rescuing them from neverending ruin. Animated with the same spirit, he will like the great apostle "endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

2. The steward, acting agreeably to his station, aims at adapting himself to the varied circumstances of the household: He endeavors to dispense that portion which is most suited to their peculiar age and necessities. This is called in scripture, "rightly dividing the word of truth; giving to every one their portion of meat in due season;" and may with propriety be pronounced the

most difficult part of ministerial duty.— Much diligence is requisite for knowing the state of “our flock,” and much discernment for accommodating our public administrations to their respective capacities. Some are ignorant and require instruction ; others are secure and ought to be alarmed ; others are presumptuous, and require to be shaken from their unscriptural confidences.— The weak need to be strengthened ; the wavering to be confirmed ; the wandering to be restored ; the fearful to be imboldened ; and the drooping to be supported, with the consolations of the covenant.

Could no other argument be adduced, this abundantly evinces the propriety of a stationary ministry, and of each minister familiarly visiting and conversing with his flock. The physician must examine his patient, before he can administer his medicine with judgment : The vine-dresser must go from tree to tree, before he knows whether to dig around and dung, or with a pruning knife to lop off the exuberant branch : The teacher must inquire into the age of the scholar, his ability, his progress in learning, before he can judiciously direct his future studies. Thus he who would approve himself faithful to his Master, or become successful in the salvation of souls, must diligently, and painfully inquire into their spiritual condition.

Bear with me, respected fathers and brethren, if I take the liberty of enlarging

on this duty ; because it is scarcely more important than unfashionable ; and probably the languor of living godliness in our churches, and the rare instances of conversion under our administrations, may be ascribed partly, if not principally, to this neglect. We are not capable rightly to divide the word of truth ; to dispense in public the mysteries of the kingdom, according to the circumstances of the family ; because we are not more employed in private conversing with the family, inquiring into their various exercises, their anxieties, their doubts, their discouragements. Consequences the most glorious attended the revival of this primitive practice in Geneva, under the ministry of Calvin, and in various other places, at the commencement of the reformation. While ministers, with their ruling elders, industriously went around from house to house ; while they carried their appeal immediately to the sinner's conscience, " teaching every man, and warning every man," their labors became eminently successful : The ignorant were instructed ; the secure alarmed ; and the weak established and edified.

3. The steward endeavors to manifest forbearance with the members of the house.— Concern for the interests of his lord induces him to exercise patience, not only with the weakness, but even with the wickedness of those committed to his charge. A disposition this of difficult attainment, yet indis-

pensibly requisite in the minister of reconciliation. Much insult, and derision, must be expected. Those who are at ease will frequently deride our admonitions as impertinent; as only calculated to ruffle their repose. The drunkard will revile us as unnecessarily precise, and as unfriendly to human happiness. The impure will attempt justifying themselves, by the backslidings of Lot, of David, and other eminent saints. The swearer will probably reward our rebukes with replying, that he intended no evil, or that he injured none but himself.— All this insult must be expected; all this, out of compassion to precious, perishing souls, ought patiently to be endured. Although the drowning man does not immediately seize the rope thrown out for his relief; yet a concern for his preservation would oblige to continue the offer. Although the man conflicting with some malignant disease, through ignorance, may reject the medicine when administered; yet a regard for his recovery will constrain to repeat the application. Rather, infinitely rather, should we patiently persevere with sinners, when their salvation or damnation for eternity are at stake. “The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all; apt to teach; patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth.” “Reprove, rebuke, exhort,” is the apostolic injunction,

“with all long-suffering and doctrine.” Our feelings may rather be injured for a time, than their souls damned for eternity. Besides, the “conversion of sinners” so obstinate constitutes our noblest triumphs; it excites in the spirits of the just the loudest hallelujahs now, and will form the brightest jewels in our crown hereafter. Noble, in this respect, and worthy our imitation was the conduct of the apostles of the Lamb.—“Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed we intreat; lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.”

But this forbearance is not necessary barely towards the unprincipled and profligate; there is equal necessity of exercising it towards the living members of the body of Christ. As in the family of nature, so in the family of grace, there is an almost infinite variety of disposition. Much imperfection adheres to the best, arising partly from ignorance, partly from prejudice of education, and custom; partly from the remains of a legal spirit, and various other causes; and a concern for their edification calls loudly for the exercise of prudence and patience. It is probably to this yielding, accommodating disposition that the apostle alludes in the following passage: “Unto the Jew, I became as a Jew; that I might gain the Jew: To the weak, I became as weak; that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men; that I might by all means save some.”

4. The steward is in all respects responsible to him by whom he was called to the office. He is answerable for every part of his conduct ; not only for the disposition of his master's goods but also for his behaviour towards the members of the house. An impression of our responsibility, as officers in the family of Jesus, ought to reign supreme in our hearts, and rouse to the most diligent discharge of every duty, It is the polar star, to which every administration, both public and private, ought unvaryingly to center. The great Ruler of the house, in committing the treasure to his different stewards, positively commands, " occupy until I come," when the reckoning will be required. While this consideration calls to unwearied diligence in discharging the duties of our high vocation, it also requires the most rigid impartiality in dispensing the mysteries of the kingdom. Solemn, awful consideration ! For each distribution of this sacred provision : for every admission to, or exclusion from, the privileges of the house, we must give account to HIM " whose eyes are as a flame of fire ;" who is now our omniscient witness ; who will shortly appear as our impartial Judge, and " render to every man according to his work." This all-solemn reflection did the great God, our Saviour, frequently revive in the minds of his apostles, and by it admonish them to unwearied industry and zeal in his service. " Behold, I come quickly : Hold fast that

which thou hast. Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord cometh. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." This awful reflection did the great apostle urge powerfully on Timothy his son, and through him on the servants of the cross, in every succeeding age ; " I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and kingdom ; preach the word ; do the work of an evangelist ; make full proof of thy ministry."

5. The steward naturally expects a suitable reward for his services. He looks up to the proprietor of the house' for an honorable compensation. In this respect, our divinely gracious Master has given the stewards in his family abundant, soul-supporting encouragement. While he forewarned us, without reserve, of all the pain, the poverty, the reproach, the persecution, which might be expected ; that we should be " hated of all men for his name's sake ;" despised by the gay as gloomy and melancholly ; ridiculed by the worldly wise, as ignorant and enthusiastic ; reproached by the great, as mean and contemptible ; disdained by the carnally secure, as disturbing the peace of society, as " turning the world upside down ;" he encourages, amidst all this contempt, with the prospect of an " exceeding and eternal weight of glory." " There is no man,

that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or lands, for my sake and the gospel, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in the present time, with persecutions, and in the world to come, eternal life." Does our profession expose to outward poverty? He promises in reversion his own "unsearchable riches." Are we called to take up our cross? This will shortly be succeeded by an incorruptible crown. Does our Master call us to be "instant in season and out of season? This shall be rewarded by an eternity of ease and enjoyment. "They shall rest from their labors. To him that overcometh, I will give to sit down with me on my throne." How did the soul of the great apostle swell beyond the chains of persecution, and rise superior to all opposition, while he contemplated that glory which was afterwards to be revealed. This prospect seemingly softened the rigors of fatigue, gilded the gloom of the dungeon, blunted the edge of the sword, quenched the violence of flames, and brightened with the light of heaven the dark vale and shadow of death. "None of these things trouble me;" not all that their ingenuity can devise, or their power perpetrate: "Neither hold I my life dear; that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him."

Equal to the bold, dignified challenges of his life, were the triumphs of his dying hour. "I am now ready to be offered; and the time of my departure is at hand." Compared with these, how base, how contemptible, have been the last expressions of those admired heroes, and poets, and philosophers; of those who by their valour have risen to empire, or by the efforts of genius have borne away the palm of literary fame. "I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

The application suggested by this doctrine is equally obvious and interesting.

1. Since the gospel of Jehovah is a mystery, its neglect or opposition by an ungodly age, and even by the worldly wise* of that age is cause, neither of surprise, nor discouragement. "The preaching of the

* The author by no means acknowledges, that the preponderancy of natural talents, or acquired learning, is, or has been on the side of infidelity; because the contrary is fact. The living God, in righteous sovereignty, may suffer many, who are carnally wise, to remain spiritual fools; yet in different ages, I may add, in every age, some who have ascended the very summit of literary eminence, have believed and advocated our holy religion. Christianity can number among her sons, a Grotius, a Newton, a Boyle, a Bacon, a Locke, a Milton, an Addison who, for every accomplishment both natural and acquired, may be pronounced the brightest ornaments of human nature. These illustrious men, although they entertained different sentiments respecting particular doctrines of scripture, yet cordially concurred in receiving it as a revelation from heaven, and in recommending it as worthy

cross is, to them that perish, foolishness.”—
 “Christ crucified,” in every period of the world, has been to many, “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; the savor of death unto death.” The reason is obvious. The human understanding is naturally blind, and cannot, of itself, discover his excellence or glory. The man without eyes cannot discern the light of the sun, or admire the beauty of colours: He who is destitute of hearing, cannot be charmed with the melodies of music: Having lost the sense of smelling, he is incapable of relishing the fragrance of the rose. As in natural, in spiritual things also, senses must be possessed suitable to the objects to be discerned. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: They are foolishness unto him: Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”—
 Whatever diversity may appear among men naturally, some possessing less, others larger capacities; or whatever difference

of all acceptation. Even in our own age, which a noted blasphemer of the Saviour’s cross has complimented as the *age of reason*, hundreds can be found, naturally as rational as himself, and whose reason has not been prostituted by foul intoxication, who believe that all scripture is given by inspiration of God; who have meekness and modesty enough to sit at the feet of Jesus, and adore those mysteries of his gospel, which they are unable fully to comprehend.

† The allusion to Thomas Paine, the author of the “Age of Reason,” is too obvious to require explanation. I shall therefore, transcribe the very words of a masterly defender of the christian faith, respecting that retailer of infidelity. “As to Paine, he is well known to have been a profane swearer and drunkard. We have evidence upon oath, that religion was his favorite topic when intoxicated.”—*Fuller’s Gospel its own Witness—Conduct of Believers and Unbelievers.—Page 98.*

may arise from the advantages of education ; in spiritual things all are equally blind, until enlightened by Jehovah the Spirit. For it is written—" I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" True it is, eminence of natural genius, improved by liberal learning, and sanctified by the Spirit of wisdom, give an immense superiority. Possessed of such qualifications, the man is capable of searching more thoroughly the mysteries of redemption: of pointing out their consistence with the divine character and government; of arranging their doctrines, and silencing the cavils of unbelievers. But first he must "learn of the Father:" Like a star of larger size, he may shine with superior lustre; but he himself must first be enlightened by "the Sun of Righteousness."

2. We learn from this passage, what are those truths which ought principally to occupy our attention; which should constitute the great theme of our private studies, and public administrations; the plain, peculiar doctrines of the cross; the simple truths of revelation, neither recommended by human wisdom, nor accommodated to human prejudice or corruption. We are appointed stewards, not of the learning of the schools; not of the discoveries of philoso-

phy ; not of the charms of moral speculation, but “of the mysteries of God.” These it becomes us humbly to improve, as sinners, who require a free salvation. These it becomes us to dispense with all simplicity, to that household over which “the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers.” This is the provision which the glorious proprietor hath committed to our trust : and to be addressing our hearers with harangues merely moral, with refined sentiments, or learned speculations, would be to offer *kusks*, or *stubble*, or *straw*, while in our *Father’s house* is bread immortal and divine. These observations, however familiar, cannot be too frequently realized : They were perhaps never more important, nor more seasonable than in the age in which we live. There is an uncommon affectation, at present, to fashion the gospel of Jesus after the wisdom of the world. Is not natural religion frequently recommended, to the degradation of revealed ? Are not virtue, morality, good will to all, lavishly extolled ; while the cardinal doctrines of peace with God through the sacrifice of Jesus ; justification through his righteousness ; regeneration and sanctification by the efficacy of his grace, are overlooked, if not rejected ? A late writer, with more hardihood than usual, has ascribed the alarming progress of infidelity to the preaching of the peculiar doctrines of christianity. On this assertion, suffice it to remark, that the discovery has been made.

since the age of the apostles, and is taught by another inspiration than that of the Holy Ghost. They spake "the wisdom of God in a mystery:" They "determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." They preached not in "the enticing words of man's wisdom, lest the cross of Christ should become of none effect. And the fact is too notorious to be denied, that when their successors endeavored to recommend themselves by blending philosophy with divinity: and the gospel of Jesus with the learning of the schools, purity of doctrine degenerated in the church,* and living

* The author takes the liberty of inserting the following remark, of the very learned and judicious Dr. Owen; and the remark is the more entitled to our attention, as it is founded upon undeniable fact. In his history of the heresies which early reproached the church, and the causes which produced them, he adds—"The pretended defence of truth, with arts and arms of another kind than the simple application of scripture, has been the bane of religion, and lost the peace of christians beyond recovery; and it may be observed, that whilst this way alone, the use of scripture for the preservation of truth, was insisted on, that although innumerable heresies arose one after another, they never made any great progress, nor attained unto any such consistency as to make a stated opposition to the truth; but the errors themselves, and their authors were as vagrant meteors, which appeared a little and vanished away. Afterwards it was not so, when other ways and means, for the suppression of heresies, were judged convenient and needful. The Lord Christ," adds this illustrious champion, in language full of consolation and triumph, "The Lord Christ continueth his word, with the faithful ministry, to reveal, declare and vindicate the sacred truth for the conviction of gainsayers; and if we are not wanting to our duty, through the aids of divine grace promised us, we shall finally triumph in this cause, and transmit this truth, inviolate, to them that succeed us in the profession of it."—*Owen's preface to his Person and Glory of Christ.*"

To this may be added the remarks of a late, very elegant, and ingenious author. After pronouncing the peculiar doctrines of the cross, the great engine of the reformation, he laments our present departure from these doctrines, and represents our gen-

godliness languished in the heart. The experiment is equally blasphemous and vain, to attempt amending the wisdom of God by the wisdom of mortals. Imboldened, therefore, by apostolic example, and encouraged by apostolic success, let us determine to rejoice in nothing as men, or to proclaim nothing as ministers, but "Jesus Christ and him crucified;" to wield in our warfare those weapons which are *not carnal*, but *spiritual*; and then we may confidently trust, that they will be "mighty through God," for the conversion and salvation of souls.

Let none conclude from these observations, that the religion of nature is renounced, or the excellence of morality denied. Shall we be charged with despising the gentle flowings of the rivulet, merely because we express greater emotions at the more majestic movements of the ocean; or with rejecting the light of the stars because we kindle with greater admiration at the more dazzling glories of the sun? We preach the necessity of love to God, not indeed as the foundation of our acceptance, but the effect of his love, "shining in the face of Je-

eral degeneracy in practice, as the legitimate consequence of such departure. "They profess to make it their chief object to inculcate the moral and practical precepts of christianity, without sufficiently maintaining, often without justly laying the grand foundation of the sinner's acceptance with God, or pointing out how the practical precepts of christianity grow out of her peculiar doctrines, and are inseparably connected with them. By this fatal error, the very genius, and essential nature of christianity underwent a change.—She no longer retained her peculiar character, or produced that appropriate frame of spirit, by which her followers had been characterised."—*Wilberforce's Views*—268, 269.

us Christ." We profess the necessity of repentance, although not to be the condition of our reconciliation, yet as a grace wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost. We exhibit the moral law, not indeed to be obeyed for salvation, but as fulfilled in its precept by the *life*, and satisfied in its penalty by the *death* of the Infinite Surety, and now proposed as the rule of our obedience in his hand. We maintain the excellence of morality, of love to God, of good will to men, although not as procuring the favor of the Eternal, yet as blessed consequences of our union to the Son of God, and influences derived from him, the ever-living HEAD. We acknowledge the charms of virtue, of patience under suffering, of forgiveness to those who injure us, of compassion towards our fellow-mortals in distress; but this virtue, this patience, this forbearance, these compassions, like so many plants of righteousness, must grow on Calvary, and be nourished with the blood of its cross. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law."

3. We learn from this doctrine the importance of being wholly occupied in the duties of our office; of being employed, either privately in exploring these mysteries of the kingdom, or publicly in distributing them to the necessities of the family. It is cause of humiliation and grief, that many, who were once solemnly consecrated to the service of the gospel, afterwards relinquish,

in part, their occupation: They prostitute their time and talents to purposes widely different and inferior. One becomes embarrassed with the cares of this world; another assumes the statesman, by engaging in political discussions; another is involved in philosophical research, or in some other pursuit, foreign to his ministerial office.— These exercises, as applied to the spiritual steward, may be pronounced “striving, but not lawfully.” Thus to be occupied, is indeed running a race, but wandering from the path which leads to the prize. “No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the cares of this life; that he may please him who hath called him to be a soldier.” What! are not the mysteries of Jehovah incarnate, and our redemption through his blood, sufficiently interesting, and ennobling to occupy our undivided attention? Here is range, ample, unbounded range, for the most speculative understanding, for the most excursive imagination. What nobler subject can occupy the research of mortals, than the mystery of a TRIUNE JEHOVAH: THREE in ONE: ONE in THREE? What more exalted theme than “God manifested in the flesh?” That matchless, mysterious name, so full of grace, so full of glory, IMMANUEL; uniting in itself, the uncreated, eternal excellencies of the God, and the finite, frail properties of the man? What subject more elevating in itself, more interesting to us, than the substitution of the Eternal Son in

our covenant room? He condemned, that we might be acquitted? He a man of sorrows, that we might partake ineffable joy? The Son degraded to the condition of a servant, that the slave might be promoted to the dignity of sons! Mysteries these, which the intellect of Gabriel, however enlarged, is too contracted to comprehend; and after the research of eternity, cannot be fully explored. How dignified in itself; how appropriate to every ambassador of Jesus, was that resolution of the apostle—"What things were gain to me;" whatever might subserve my worldly ease or interest; whatever might promote my reputation as a scholar and philosopher; "these I counted loss for Christ." We behold this illustrious champion, taking each external advantage, nobly sacrificing it on the cross of Calvary, and desiring to glory in "nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." That same ministry, which formed the delight, and boast of his own soul, he powerfully* pressed upon Timothy his son:—"Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.—Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy,

* The obligations imposed on candidates for the ministry in the Episcopal church so replete with sound instruction, and so pertinent to our present purpose, cannot be improperly inserted. "They are required to have always painted on their remembrance, how great a treasure was committed to their charge; and to apply themselves, wholly to this one thing, and to draw all their cares, and studies this way, and to this end; and that by their daily reading and weighing the scriptures, they will study to wax riper and stronger in the ministry."—*Burnet's Pastoral Care*, page 89.

with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear unto all."

Permit me, reverend fathers and brethren, to trespass longer on your patience, by adverting to the high dignity and awful solemnity, of this stewardship which is committed to our trust. How honorable the condition of being "workers together with God," in that most sublime, most astonishing, of his purposes, the recovery of a perishing world! To stand as ambassadors for the KING of kings, and by all the majesty of his authority, by all the endearments of his grace, entreat sinners to be reconciled, to believe, and repent, and be saved! "The ministry of reconciliation is given us." In holy admiration, may not each of us exclaim—"Lord! what am I, that I should be thus distinguished; that to me the unsearchable riches should be entrusted!" In holy gratitude, may we not adore with the apostle, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord," that, weak as I am, worthless as I am, "he hath accounted me faithful; putting me into the ministry:" He hath committed to me that treasure, by which my own soul may be enriched, and which enriches to immortal glory all who receive it! That Jehovah should save any of our apostate race, is a subject of wonder; but that he should choose one of this race, who is by nature equally guilty, polluted, and abominable, and appoint him

the instrument of salvation to others, is a wonder that surpasseth : It is a mystery of sovereignty and grace, which excites our gratitude now, and must fill all heaven with admiration through eternity. "O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things ; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Again, bear with me, while we reflect on the awful solemnity of our office. To us the souls, the precious souls of men, are now committed ; and at our hands, if indolent or unfaithful, their damnation will finally be charged. Are we duly impressed with this all-solemn consideration ? Do we occasionally throw our eyes over our flock, viewing each individual, whether aged or young, under our care, as a trust committed us of the living God ; as a candidate for an immortal destiny, either of glory, or of wrath ? Are we watching over them, "with prayers and tears, night and day, as those who must give an account that we may do it with joy and not with grief ?" Have we been in no instance chargeable, either through indifference or untenderness, with the complaint urged against the shepherds of Israel ? "Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe with the wool, but ye feed not the flock.—The diseased have ye not strengthened ; neither have ye healed that which was sick ;

neither have ye bound up that which was broken ; neither have ye brought again that which was driven away ; neither have ye sought that which was lost." Are we careful to recommend, by every part of our deportment in private, those doctrines which we announce from the pulpit—" Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed ; but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God ; in labors, in watchings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the armour of righteousness, upon the right hand and upon the left." If any man neglect the great salvation, he shall not, he cannot escape : But the damnation of the unholy, unprofitable servant, must be dreadful beyond description. While he is doomed to endure, in his own person, that worm which never dies, and those flames which shall never be quenched ; that worm must be envenomed, and those flames infuriated by the blasphemies of others, brought to perdition through his inattention and sloth. They will be eternally reviling him ; gnashing their teeth upon him, as chargeable with their destruction, by not forewarning them of that place of torment. " O Lord, who is sufficient for these things ? O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant ; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

Impressed with these considerations does

it not become us to awake from our sloth ; to throw off every weight, whatever might embarrass us in discharging the duties of our high vocation ; to keep every gift and grace in constant, vigorous exercise ; to occupy, with unremitting diligence, each moment of our time ? Accursed be that present ease, which is indulged at the peril of never-ending pain. Let that gain be rejected, as worse than loss, which is obtained at the hazard of our own damnation, or the damnation of those committed to our care. May those moments perish from the record of our lives, which are wasted in idleness or amusements, in worldly company, or worldly avocations, while our brethren by nature are sinking a prey to devouring flames. Let those honors wither in eternal disgrace, which are sought in pursuits foreign to our ministerial profession, while men are “ perishing, for whom Christ died ;” men who might have eternally adorned his mediatorial crown. By all the value of our own souls ; by all the value of the souls of others ; by the compassions of a bleeding Saviour ; by the solemnities of his second appearing ; by the terrors of being “ cast, as unprofitable servants, into outer darkness,” while others, our inferiors, it may be, in age, and opportunity, and office, are welcomed to the joys of their Lord let us be roused to “ preach the word ; to remain instant in season, and out of season ; to make full proof of our ministry.” The Lord enable us all

so to run, that we may obtain the prize.— May he render us instrumental in turning “many to righteousness” that, through the riches of his grace, we may “shine as stars, and suns in his everlasting kingdom.”

Called to be a steward of the mysteries of God, I conclude offering them to the reception of the family present. By the authority of the great Lord of the house, I this moment unlock these treasures, these inexhaustible treasures, and tender them for the use, and enjoyment of every man, and woman in this assembly.—Art thou in poverty? I present these unsearchable riches. Art thou naked? I offer thee incorruptible clothing; robes of everlasting righteousness.—Art thou in want? I tender thee immortal bread; that bread, of which he who partakes shall hunger no more. Art thou in debt, bound over to the curse of a broken covenant? I announce the jubilee of release: I offer thee a pardon, written in the blood of God, and sealed by a triune Jehovah.—Art thou unworthy? I am warranted to tender all of grace, free, absolute, unconditional, unmerited grace. All these treasures of the kingdom, precious as they are, costly as they were to the dear Redeemer; all these treasures are as free to thee, as the grace of Jehovah can render them, or his lips can pronounce them. Would to God, I could prevail with you to receive them! Would to God, I could persuade every male, and every female; the bond and the free;

the black and the white ; the more pure and the more profligate ; to draw near, and accept this great salvation. “ The Spirit and the Bride say, come : Let him that heareth say, come : Let him that is athirst, come ; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life, freely.” “ We are ambassadors for Christ ; as though God did beseech you by us ; we pray you in Christ’s stead ; be ye reconciled to God.”

“ Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us ;” to this Lord Jesus who purchased, with the eternal Father who elected, and the ever-blessed Spirit who applies, the Author of all grace in time, and of all glory through eternity be ascribed worship and adoration, now and everlastingly. **AMEN.**

THE
FEMALE LABORER
IN THE
GOSPEL.

Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all...
PROVERBS XXXI. 29.

*And many women were there, beholding a far off, which followed Jesus from Galilee ministering unto him.....*MATTHEW XXVII. 55.

VOL. 4.

Z 2

To the Female Members of his congregation, particularly to the Members of the FEMALE SOCIETY, in Salem, for the promotion of religious knowledge, the following *Sermon*, prepared chiefly for their use, and now published at their request, is inscribed with profound esteem and affection,

By their Brother

In the fellowship of the

Redeemer's cross and consolations,

ALEXANDER PROUDFIT.

Salem, August 6, 1805.

THE
FEMALE LABORER &c.



PHILIPPIANS IV. 3.

*Help those women which labored with me in
the gospel.*

THE religion of Christ Jesus the Lord is literally and eminently a religion of love; it diffuses through the heaven born spirit a principle of love, not only to God who is perfection itself; who is the author of every blessing both temporal and spiritual, but it inspires love the most ardent and unfeigned to all who bear his image.—The christian, expanded by the benign influence of this religion, contemplates the redeemed of all countries as one great society of brethren and sisters; he considers the followers of the Lamb by whatever name they are known, in whatever region they reside, under whatever circumstances they are placed, of whatever colour they are, or station they occupy, as one great family united by a relation intimate and indissoluble; as the offspring of the same Father, redeemed by the same divine Jesus, renewed by the same Spirit, and fellow heirs of the same grace and glory. Animated and ennobled by this principle, the apostle concludes his epistle to the Phillippians with the most tender expressions of affection to

their persons, and concern for their prosperity.

“Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved:” Overlooking those outward distinctions which probably existed among them as men, he addresses them indiscriminately, whether male or female, whether bond or free, as “brethren: They being many” he considered as “*one body*” in Christ and members one of the other; he pronounces them “dearly beloved,” not for any excellence which they naturally possessed, because they were formerly “children of wrath even as others, hateful and hating one another,” but for the righteousness of Jehovah Christ with which they were adorned, and his image which appeared in their lives and conversation.

“And longed for;” as a fond father ardently desires to see the face of a beloved son who had been long absent, or as an affectionate husband whom duty had called from home is impatient to return and revisit the partner of his life, the apostle longs to see these believing Philippians; he is anxious to know how their souls prosper and “to impart some spiritual gift for their” more complete “establishment.”

“My joy:” He pronounces them his present “joy.” It was a source of sublime, unspeakable rejoicing that he had been instrumental in their saving conversion; that he had brought them from the corruption of their natural state into “the glorious liberty

of the sons of God." "And crown;" he acknowledges these believers not only his present joy but his future glory, his distinguishing honor in that hour when they "who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars;" when each sinner brought to salvation through our instrumentality will add another jewel to our unfading crown: "So stand fast in the Lord, dearly beloved:" he exhorts them to an unshaken constancy and steadfastness in their christian profession; that "as they had received Christ Jesus the Lord they would carefully walk in him;" that they would aim at growing up more and more unto the measure of the stature of his fulness; that they would improve him daily as their light in darkness, their shield in danger, their glory in reproach, their confidence in death.

"I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord:" Harmony among its members, mutual confidence, mutual esteem and affection form the chief glory of the visible church; by a deportment thus peaceful and amiable "the children of light" are particularly distinguished from "the children of darkness" who are "hateful and hating one another, who are enemies to God" and consequently enemies to each other. The apostle, therefore, earnestly entreats these members of the Philippian church "to be of the same mind," to cherish that forgiving, affectionate disposition which became them

as the acknowledged followers of the Lamb; that as they were *one* by outward profession, were baptized in *one* name, had *one* hope of their calling, and received at *one* table the symbols of the Lord's body and blood, they would cultivate a disposition suitable to a relation so intimate, that no jar nor jealousy might be permitted to interrupt their christian communion, or embitter their christian enjoyments, but that they would be of "the same mind in the Lord," making his word the rule, and his glory the end of their actions.

To whom the apostle alludes under the character of "true yoke fellow" in the succeeding verse cannot be fully determined, although various conjectures are formed.—It is the opinion of some that he referred to one who had usually accompanied him in travelling from place to place, and had contributed much to his support in advancing the gospel of our Lord; but the person addressed as "true yoke fellow" was more probably some leading character in the Philippian church: one whose gifts and graces and disinterested zeal in promoting their spiritual interests had raised him to eminent influence and importance in that particular society. To his attention the apostle affectionately recommends "those women who had labored with him in the gospel; help those women;" minister to them all necessary encouragement and support; sympathize with them amidst every

disappointment which they may experience; exhort them to remain “stedfast and immoveable” in their christian profession, and to be “always abounding in the work of the Lord;” animate them to a holy zeal in these labors of the gospel by the prospect of that “incorruptible crown, that exceeding, eternal weight of glory which will be shortly conferred on the faithful followers of the Lamb. They who overcome shall inherit all things;” they will be exalted to a seat “with the Mediator on his throne, even as he also overcame and sat down with the Father on his throne.”

Without trespassing on your patience by any other remarks on the different branches of the text, it is intended to inquire in what manner *women* may consistently unite with ministers *in the labor of the gospel*, and also to mention some considerations by which they are reasonably constrained to this spiritual service.

Our first inquiry is, the manner in which *women* may consistently unite with ministers *in the labor of the gospel*.

It is perhaps unnecessary to remark that they are not called to *labor in the gospel* by assuming the ministerial office, or publicly engaging in the exercises of preaching and exhortation. This is a service which our adorable Lord has not required, and which, therefore, they are not warranted to perform. But there are other duties more private in their nature, and more suited to the

delicacy of their sex, in which they may be nearly, if not equally subservient to their Master's glory, and the edification of souls.

1. They may and ought to labor with ministers by frequent prayer for Jehovah's blessings on their administrations. All our success in the discharge of each ministerial duty depends intimately and exclusively on his co-operating grace. *Man may plant and water, but God must give the increase* : The utmost fidelity in our Master's service ; the most painful application to our private studies ; the most ardent zeal in proclaiming from the pulpit the whole counsel of God ; the most unwearied diligence in going around from house to house, " warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom," will be profitable only as they are accompanied with the breathings of the Divine Spirit. *Holy women* may, therefore, labor with ministers by recommending their admonitions and exhortations to the blessing of the Lord, by frequently and fervently wrestling with him for success to their labors whether private or publick ; that *their gospel*, through the energies of the Spirit of life and of power, " might have free course and be glorified" in the salvation of men.— Much *may* be done, much *has* been done *in the closet* for the advancement of the gospel in the church ; when christians, retired from the view of the world, with no eye upon them but the eye of their Father, approach " the mercy-seat," assail heaven by humble,

fervent supplication, and “give the Lord no rest day nor night until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” Their *prayers* come before him “as incense, and the lifting up of their hands as the evening sacrifice” through the all-prevailing name of Jesus ; and afterwards descend in showers of blessing on the sanctuary. “The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous” person “availeth much.— Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? he will avenge them speedily.

2. Women may and ought to labor with ministers in the gospel by the diligent instruction of their household, whether children or servants ; by improving every scriptural means “for bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” By a becoming zeal* in this respect they have eminently co-operated with ministers, and eminently contributed to the advancement of religion in the world. I am fully persuaded that the foundation of personal godliness and of the spiritual prosperity of congregations is ordinarily laid in private families. Unprofitable, humanly speaking, will be our *watering* from the pulpit unless parents are industrious at home in sowing the immortal seed : I am equally persuaded

* An illustrious instance of female zeal in promoting the spiritual edification of her household, was the late Lady *Falkland*. She ordinarily spent an hour every morning in prayer and catechising and instructing them : On the morning of the Lord's day she rose earlier than usual, and occupied it in secret devotion and in examining her children and servants.

that the opportunities of female christians for advancing the spiritual education of their household are far superior to those of the male. They are not so perplexed with the cares of the world ; they are more constantly with their children, and therefore have a better opportunity of witnessing their conduct, of reproving what is improper and recommending what is right ; they possess, for the most part, a greater share in the affections of their children, and therefore admonish and exhort with a stronger probability of success ; again, being more generally present and conversing with them, they learn their various dispositions and acquire a happier talent of conveying instruction in a manner suited to their age and capacity. What numerous instances might be mentioned of female zeal and success in the spiritual admonition of their offspring. We hear upon one occasion the pious resolution of Hannah respecting the education of Samuel her son. “ I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head ; I will bring him that he may appear before the Lord and abide there for ever. We read in his future life the blessed fruits of an early education thus pious. “ Samuel ministered before the Lord being a child ;” he was very early favored with the manifestation of the Most High, and grew up a public and lasting blessing to the nation of Israel. We may mention the exemplary zeal of Lois and Eunice,

the grand-mother and mother of Timothy. Through their early attention and instruction, he “from a child* knew the holy scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation ;” and what an abundant harvest sprung up to the church from the seed thus early sown.—He was afterwards “a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,” and was the honored instrument of turning many to righteousness.—John the evangelist dedicates his second epistle to “the elect lady and her children whom he loved in the truth :” he appears to consider himself indebted to her for enforcing upon her family in private those doctrines which he delivered in public, and looks upon her children as the seals of her pious administrations ; nay, her concern for the salvation of souls seemingly extended far beyond the boundaries of her particular family, because the Evangelist adds, “whom I love in the truth, and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth.”

3. They may and ought to labor with ministers in the gospel by conscientiously attending their administrations, and thus recommending religion by the force of their godly example.—Many women are men-

* The word, translated *child*, was generally used among the Jews for expressing a *babe or suckling* ; it was usually applied to little children under the age of three or four years. This circumstance shews at what an early period the attention of these holy women was directed to the spiritual nurture of their son.—Gradually as the powers of his mind began to unfold, they were directed to the truth as it is in Jesus and to the things which concern his everlasting peace.

tioned in the sacred records as singularly devout "in walking in all the commandments and ordinances of God." Miriam the sister of Aaron accompanied Moses at their national thanksgiving, and animated the daughters of Israel by the ardor of her zeal. "Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her; and Miriam answered them, sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." To Miriam, the sister of Aaron, may be added *Anna the prophetess*, as one distinguished for her zeal in attending the public institutions of Jehovah. *She was a widow*, therefore, probably, encumbered with the sole management of a family; it may be, oppressed and embarrassed with poverty of outward condition; she had attained to the age "of fourscore and four years," and consequently must have labored under much infirmity of body; those circumstances could readily have been offered by a cold, lifeless professor as an apology for rarely appearing in the sanctuary of the living God: they might have excused her in some degree to her own conscience and to the christian world; but the tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts were her chief delight; for these she thirsted more ardently than the hart panteth after the cooling stream, and thither she must press amidst ten thousand difficulties and discouragements; there she desired to ap-

appear not only for her own edification, but that by the influence of her example she might recommend to others the paths of righteousness. "This mother in Israel," the inspired historian testifies, "departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." An attention thus uniform and ardent to every ordinance of God has an astonishing influence in recommending the gospel of Jesus. "Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." The solemn, devout appearance of one christian in the sanctuary admonishes the indifference and irregularity of another; it is frequently a means of exciting their emulation and inflaming their zeal.

"They may and ought to labor with ministers by devising liberal plans for diffusing the gospel of Jesus and enlarging the boundaries of his kingdom. Their attention should be occupied inquiring what schemes may be adopted for instructing the ignorant around them; for rousing to a consideration of their ways the secure and unconcerned, and conveying to distant and destitute places the knowledge of salvation through the Redeemer's name. Plans equally generous and disinterested have been executed in different ages by women of piety and fortune; churches have been erected; free schools established for the education of indigent children; hospitals have been founded for accommodating the sick and the doc-

trines of life have been propagated in remote, unenlightened parts of the earth. I cannot be charged with extravagance in asserting that the zeal of *female* believers for diffusing the knowledge of Jesus, has almost incomparably outshone, and their deeds of charity to the bodies and souls of men, almost incomparably exceeded any thing recorded in the history of the *male*.—The boundless contributions of a Miss *Gray*,* a Lady *Glenorchy*, and a Lady *Huntingdon* remain a lasting monument of reproof to men of fortune; and their names will adorn the historian's page while charity is cherished or religion revered in the world. They, *although dead*, yet live, and speak, and admonish by their liberal, disinterested exertions for promoting the honor of their Redeemer and the salvation of their fellow creatures. Having *freely received* from the hand of a bounteous God, they *freely gave* for the spread of his gospel and the promotion of his glory: *As vessels of peculiar honor* they were entrusted with a more than ordinary share of his treasures, both temporal and spiritual, and these they cheerfully imparted for the encouragement of every humane or pious design. Through their instrumentality various churches were formed, and thousands† of perishing sinners are now favored with the means of eternal life.

* Besides a series of liberal donations for pious and charitable uses, during a period of twelve years, Miss GRAY, at her decease, bequeathed above twenty-five thousand dollars to public institutions in and around the city of Edinburgh, where she resided.

† "At her death, Lady HUNTINGDON left her churches to trust-

Is such the manner in which female christians have and may consistently labor with ministers in promoting the gospel of our common Lord? are their opportunities both frequent and favorable for contributing to the advancement of his honor and the immortal interests of their generation? it is proper to inquire by what considerations they are constrained to this service.

This was our second inquiry, and to this your attention is now invited.

1. To this labor of the gospel they are reasonably constrained by Jehovah's goodness displayed both in their creation and redemption. It is an eternal truth, and would to God it was more uniformly impressed on my own soul; and the soul of every hearer, whether male or female, **THAT WE ARE NOT OUR OWN**; we are not the authors of our own existence either natural or spiritual, and are therefore obliged *to live, not to ourselves, but to HIM* who made and redeemed us. Is the eye which sees, the ear which hears, the tongue which utters, the understanding which comprehends, the memory which retains, created of God? is it not reasonable

tees and executors to continue the plan which she had commenced in her life; and this they have pursued with great zeal and increasing success. Not fewer than one hundred thousand persons now enjoy the preaching of the gospel through her means."—*Memoirs of Pious Women, Vol. 2, p. 300.* If a cup of cold water given to a disciple of Jesus will not be forgotten in the hour of final retribution, what an exceeding, eternal weight of glory will be conferred on one who has comparatively counted all things but loss for his sake; who has virtually offered up houses, and lands, and possessions on the altar of love to the Saviour and compassion to perishing souls.

that they should be devoted *to* him and employed *for* him? Are the numerous blessings which crown our condition in life merely streams from the overflowing fountain of his goodness? are our silver and our gold derived from his treasures, is it not reasonable that a portion of them be rendered subservient to his glory? Are we redeemed from destruction by his rich, unmerited love? was this redemption accomplished by a plan so mysterious, a price so immense as the death of an *only*, a beloved Son, this adds an obligation infinitely powerful to shew forth his praise; *to spend and be spent in his service.* This is the argument which the great apostle employed for interesting the hearts of the believing Romans, and which I would now employ for impressing my own heart; no less than my sisters in Christ Jesus. "I beseech you by the mercies of God," by all that sovereignty, that grace which was manifested in rescuing you from misery so great, and restoring you to glories so unfading, "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, which is your reasonable service." This argument he afterwards repeats in his epistle to the Corinthian church; "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's." Is the woman possessed of privileges in common with the man? is she created by the same Lord, redeemed by the same blood, endowed with the same ra-

tional and immortal powers, a fellow heir of the same grace and glory? she is, therefore, reasonably obligated to unite with him in the labors of the gospel.

2. To this service they are powerfully constrained by motives of compassion to the souls of their fellow creatures. We cannot altogether repress the feelings of pity and sympathy, while we behold the outward miseries of others. Who can deliberately shut their door against the man that is perishing in the wintry storm, or refuse a morsel of bread to him who is starving with hunger? Who can forbear to cheer the spirit broken with repeated calamity, or to aim at drying up the tears of the disconsolate widow? The moment that our eyes behold the wretched object, they necessarily affect the heart, and the heart irresistably heaves with emotions of pity and longs to relieve. This tenderness towards the miseries of others, this disposition to sympathize eminently adorns the female character; and remember, beloved sisters, it cannot be so nobly indulged as in pitying their spiritual woes, and attempting to minister relief. Surely compassion to the souls of men is incomparably more refined than even compassion to their bodies. Was I lost in some dreary waste, far from the habitations of men, and the shadows of the evening began to close fast around me, I should feel grateful to the man who met me in the hour of distress and conducted my wandering steps to some a-

greeable abode ; but my obligations are infinitely greater to him who overtakes me when wandering in the maze of my natural state, estranged from God, enveloped in the gloom of spiritual night, and points out to me in the light of eternal truth the path "to glory and honor and immortality : Was I travelling the burning sands of Africa, was my body exhausted with fatigue and my spirits fainting with thirst, I must esteem the man who melted at my misery and directed my drooping eye to some cooling stream ; but I must hold him in estimation incomparably higher who meets me in all the wretchedness of my fallen condition, tortured with ten thousand anxieties, hurrying from cistern to cistern in pursuit of happiness, but always disappointed, and leads me to the refreshing streams "of the water of life," to that "living fountain of which he who drinks shall thirst no more : " Was I pursued hard by an unfeeling foe, did he press nearer and nearer, thirsting for my blood, I necessarily would feel obligated to the man who interposed in the moment of peril and secured me from the pursuer's rage ; but my obligations are inconceivably greater to him who beholds me surrounded with legions of spiritual adversaries ; who points out the city of refuge, and thus secures me eternally from "the avenger of blood." Was I—but I forbear to multiply comparisons ; as an immortal spirit is nobler than a frail, perishable body, to com-

passionate its distresses and aim at relieving them is charity incomparably the most exalted. Cast your eyes around, ye daughters of Zion, and behold what spectacles of wo meet them in every direction ! How many in parts adjacent, in parts remote are sickening and dying with the contagion of sin, and yet are either ignorant or regardless of the cure : They scarcely know that “there is balm in Gilead and a physician there ;” they have rarely heard the reviving tidings that JESUS “came to seek and to save them that are lost ;” that “the FATHER sent his SON to be the Saviour of the world.”— While your eyes behold their pitiable situation, let your hearts tenderly sympathize, let them speedily devise the means of relief. “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

3. To this labor of the gospel they are constrained by a concern for their own future felicity and glory. In the sovereignty and grace of God a certain connexion is established between obedience and reward. “He that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. If any man serve me, him will my Father honor.” The Lord God is not at all dependant on us for the accomplishment of his purposes ; he could easily employ other agents for the execution of his designs, or he might with infinite justice have demanded the one half or third of our

time and treasures for acts of piety and mercy without adding any promise of reward ; he might afterwards have pronounced us "unprofitable stewards" restoring only a part of what his bounty had given us : But he rather deals with man as a free agent ; he exhibits our duty, and tenders an abundant "recompence of reward" to those who honestly aim at discharging it. "To them, who by patient continuing in well doing, seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will render eternal life." Each sacrifice of our outward ease or interest, which is made with a view to the advancement of his glory, will be openly acknowledged and amply rewarded at his final appearing. How full of condescension on his part, how replete with encouragement on our part, is that testimony which the Judge will finally bear to the services of his people ! "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom—for I was an hungered and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger and ye took me in ; naked and ye clothed me ; sick, and in prison and ye came unto me ; in as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

I trust that it is unnecessary to repeat an observation which has been frequently made ; that these good works do not purchase our heaven ; that they do not constitute either in

whole or in part our title to the everlasting kingdom. There is one term of admission to glory for the most pure and the most profligate ; for the most indolent, unprofitable cumberer of his Lord's vineyard, and the most industrious, useful laborer, **FREE GRACE** through the righteousness of Jehovah the Redeemer. Abraham, "the father of the faithful," Paul, "the chief of the apostles," and "these women who labored in the gospel," were as really, and exclusively indebted to "free grace" as Manasseh the murderer, the thief on the cross, or the Corinthian adulterer. *Grace*, to the utter exclusion of human works as the meritorious part, "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

This passage, thus briefly illustrated, evidently suggests,

1. That in the service of the adorable Redeemer toil and trials may be expected. It appears to be the unalterable appointment of God that nothing important can be accomplished in the present life without painful exertion and numerous discouragements. The traveller is frequently fatigued in the prosecution of his journey ; he suffers, in turn, from the scorching sun of summer and the chilling blasts of winter : The student frequently feels his body and spirits exhausted in the lawful pursuit of learning, in obtaining those qualifications which are requisite for the station to which providence is calling him : the patience of the

husbandman is tried with the labors of the field, and his hopes of a ripening harvest are frequently blasted. This is a part of *the curse* which attends our apostacy from God, and is bitterly felt even by the generation of the righteous in this state of imperfection. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened. Arduous labor, numerous trials must also be expected by those who minister in holy things, and whose attention is earnestly bent on the salvation of others. The student does not become learned by slumbering on his couch and vainly dreaming, "I am wise;" the husbandman cannot sit slothfully in his house and command his "pastures to be clothed with flocks and his vallies to be covered over with corn." Can parents say to their children, "be ye fed," and they are immediately filled, "be ye clothed" and they are immediately warmed? Neither can they who are eagerly set on "winning souls" to the Saviour, address their ignorant families and neighbors, "be ye instructed" and they are instantly taught; "be ye regenerated" and the mighty change is effected; "be ye converted" and they are turned to the living God. In the accomplishment of any measure appropriate means must be employed. They who expect to be instrumental "in winning souls" must "labor in the gospel;" they must "spend and be spent," embracing each favorable opportunity and employing every mean appoint-

ed of Jehovah for their conversion. "They must endure all things for the elect's sake that they may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." What unwearied diligence is requisite seizing every opportunity "of doing good;" what wisdom in determining when to "forbear" with sinners, or when to "admonish and exhort;" what "long-suffering in giving line upon line," entreaty upon entreaty, notwithstanding their stupid indifference and neglect; what circumspection over our own conduct and conversation lest we defeat the force of our instruction by the levity of our example; what hours of ardent supplication with Zion's King for his blessing to accompany our endeavors; what continual heaviness, what unutterable anguish of heart amidst disappointed expectations, when they who "begin in the spirit end in the flesh;" when the blossoms which opened fair and promised abundant fruit are suddenly blasted "by the cares" or pleasures "of the world and the deceitfulness of riches?" What fatigue of body, what reproach of character, what anxiety and even agony of spirit did the great apostle endure in the work of the gospel? "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." Again—"In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in dis-

tresses, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by love unfeigned, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true, as chastened and not killed; sorrowful yet always rejoicing; as poor yet making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing all things." His deep solicitude, his great anxiety for the conversion of men, he compares to the pains of "a woman in travail," and his unceasing exertions in promoting it to the strivings of a man in a race, or a soldier in the field of battle. He also represents these "women as laboring," or as it might be rendered, "wrestling with him in the gospel," plainly intimating their earnestness and diligence in the work, that their time and strength and worldly substance were made subservient to the spread of divine truth and the eternal salvation of men.

2. We learn from this doctrine that much may be done by persons of every station and every sex for the honor of our Redeemer, and the spiritual interests of others. Female christians are frequently reluctant to engage in public measures for the promotion of religion; they are afraid of moving beyond the sphere allotted them in providence, of leaving that retired station, those more private virtues which are equally the characteristic and ornament of their sex. We acknowledge that a retired station and the gentler virtues appear more becom-

ing their character ; yet this diffidence of manners, this disposition for a retired sphere which in a certain degree is expedient and ornamental, may be readily indulged to excess. "Miriam the sister of Aaron" was bold in ascribing glory to Israel's God for the deliverance he had wrought and animated the daughters of Zion to that exercise : Hannah the mother of Samuel was open in offering the tribute of thanks to Jehovah for an answer to her prayers and the gift of a son : "Anna the prophetess" was public in the profession of her faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah, and spake of HIM "to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem : Priscilla, the wife of Aquila," was open, unshaken in her attachment to the apostle, accompanying him from place to place ; she undertook to teach an "eloquent Apollos the way of God more perfectly ;" yet were these illustrious personages impeached with presumptuous conduct, were they charged with throwing off that softness, that gentleness of manner which form the ornament of the female character ? No ; "they are held in everlasting remembrance ;" their names are embalmed on the inspired page, and their zeal is exhibited as a pattern for the imitation of all succeeding generations. With what elevated sentiments of esteem and affection does the apostle mention the latter of these women ; he acknowledges not only his personal obligations to "this mother in Israel," but the

obligation of the whole society of the faithful? "to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles:" he considers her edifying conversation and example as diffusing their happy influence throughout every part of the christian community.

3. This passage may be improved for admonishing and animating female believers to a dignified zeal in promoting the gospel of our Lord. "Seeing, ye DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM, seeing ye also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," with a splendid retinue of *women*, in earlier and latter ages, who lived the ornament of their sex, the glory of human nature, the blessing of their own age, the admiration of future generations: *women* whose characters were adorned with every virtue, private, relative, and social; in whom appeared fervent piety to God, unfeigned charity to men, zeal for the diffusion of the gospel and solicitude for the salvation of others; are ye "compassed with a cloud of witnesses so great, ARISE AND TRIM UP YOUR LAMPS; lay aside every weight" and rouse into vigorous exercise each gift and grace in imitation of their high example. You have the same command authorizing your exertions, the same plenitude of grace to support in the arduous work, the same compassionate Saviour to sympathize amidst every discouragement that may attend "your labors in the gospel;" and the same prize of im-

mortality at the end of your christian course. Let each female hearer, who has beheld the glory of Jesus or felt the constraining influence of his love, solemnly inquire what are the peculiar duties of my station? How may I most successfully labor with ministers in advancing the gospel of my gracious Lord?

YE WOMEN who have an interest at our Father's throne : on whom the Holy Ghost has rested as the spirit of supplication, labor with us by frequent and fervent prayer for the success of our gospel ; wrestle *mightily* with Israel's Shepherd for his blessing on our feeble administration, that it may please him " by the foolishness of our preaching to save" precious souls. " Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence and give him no rest until he arise and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

YE WOMEN, who are honored with children, whose tables are encircled with these rising *plants*, your own rejoicing and the future hopes of Zion, labor with us by ardently promoting their salvation ; " be instant in season and out of season" advising and admonishing, and expostulating with them. If there be any consolation in Christ, any thing endearing in these little pledges of your Father's love, any thing valuable in their immortal souls, any thing desirable in their usefulness through life, any thing interesting in their future glory and blessedness, " fulfil ye my joy" by making their

instruction your chief employment, and their salvation your chief concern. The Lord God has conferred a peculiar honor on the woman in frequently, I venture to add, in ordinarily using her instrumentality for the conversion of her children. In reading the history of those who were early brought to the knowledge of the truth, or lived public and eminent blessings to the world, I have noticed that their first impressions may be usually traced back to her exertions ; a Samuel, a Timothy, a Gardiner, a Newton, a Lady Glenorchy appear each of them to have been indebted, under God, to the early prayers, and tears, and entreaties of a pious mother.

YE WOMEN, who are crowned with worldly affluence ; on whom Jehovah has poured in rich profusion the treasures of the earth, *labour* with us by devising and executing liberal measures for the enlargement of his kingdom. While you reflect that your silver and your gold are derived from his bounty, let them flow in the advancement of his glory. Bear with me if I use freedom in admonishing and exhorting on the proper distribution of your wealth, because on this not only the salvation of thousands but your own eternal rejoicing and glorying intimately depend. “ Charge them that are rich in this world ;” and how does HE, “ whose are the silver and the gold,” require that these talents be occupied ? In luxury of diet or dress ; in personal or family aggrandize-

ment ; in adding possession to possession, and thus securing an independence for their offspring after them ? No, widely different is his solemn, sovereign command. " Charge them that are rich in this world that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

YE WOMEN, who are poor in this world ; who are encumbered with many cares, who have numerous families and look on this hand and the other hand and see little prospect of their support, labor with us by throwing your " single mite into the treasury of God." It is not the possession of much, but the proper occupation of what you do possess that is accepted of Jehovah and secures the reward. " The widow's farthing" will be cheerfully acknowledged by HIM who judges " according to what a man hath and not according to what he hath not." One talent well improved amounts to more in his estimation than ten or ten thousand slothfully neglected.

Shall I multiply arguments for animating my christian hearers, male and female, to imitate those who have gone before " in the labors of the gospel ?" Shall I call forth to their consideration the infinite, eternal obligations imposed on us by the redeeming love of the Son of God ? Shall I dwell on those complicated miseries from which he

has delivered, the curse of a broken covenant, the terrors of an accusing conscience, the afflictions of the present world, the horrors of "the second death, the blackness of darkness for ever?" Shall I mention those great and everlasting privileges to which he restores, "the assurance of our Father's love, joy in the Holy Ghost," support amidst the numerous evils of life, victory over death, the joys and glories of his heavenly kingdom? Waving these considerations, however interesting, I would direct your attention to the solemnities of death and of judgment. Suppose that we were this moment placed on the verge of eternity, that our eyes were now closing on all terrestrial scenes and our immortal spirits just winging their flight to a world unknown, whose condition would then be most joyous, whose reflections the most reviving? *Their's* who could look back on a life wasted in carnal ease and enjoyment, or *their's* who had actively occupied their hours for God and their generation; *their's* who could recollect evenings spent in unprofitable visits, in splendid circles, in the wanton dance, or *their's* who could reflect on evenings employed in teaching their families at home, in spiritual conference and prayer with their brethren in Christ Jesus, or in going around relieving the temporal and spiritual wants of his disconsolate members. In short, *theirs* who had wantonly "sown to the flesh and of the flesh must now reap corruption;" or

theirs who had been diligently "sowing to the spirit and of the spirit shall reap life everlasting?" Surely their situation does not admit even of a comparison. The former begin to feel the remorse of a guilty conscience as a presage of "that worm which never dies," and hell from beneath pours around them its gloomy horrors; the latter experience a "joy unspeakable," and the "day star" of glory sheds around them its cheering light. Suppose that you were this moment summoned to the tribunal of the Son of Man, that your ears already heard the dread alarm, arise, ye dead, and come to judgment, and that your eyes beheld "the great white throne" erected, the Judge descending "and the books opened," whose condition would then be most blessed, and whose prospects the most glorious? *Their's* who had eagerly heaped up wealth for their children when the gospel of Jesus was not propagated, and his needy members not supplied, the naked not clothed, the hungry not fed, and the disconsolate not comforted; *their's* "who had slept on beds of ivory, that eat the lambs out of the flock and the calves out of the stall, that chanted to the sound of the viol," and gave every anxiety to the winds; or *their's* who had been "rich in good works, ready to distribute" for the encouragement of each pious and liberal plan; who employed their vacant hours not in wanton amusement, but going about doing good; who occupied their wealth not in

splendor of dress, not in “faring sumptuously,” not in the support of each fashionable indulgence, but in spreading the knowledge of salvation, who, in imitation of the eastern Patriarch, were “eyes to the blind and feet to the lame; who delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless also and him that had none to help him?” In short, whose condition will be the most blessed and whose prospects the most transporting on that all-dreadful, decisive day? *Their's* whom the Judge will hail with that reviving acclamation, “come, ye blessed of my Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat,” &c. or *their's* to whom he will denounce with a tone more terrible than thunder, “depart from me, ye cursed, for I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat,” &c. Methinks I hear each individual anxiously exclaim, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end, like his, be peace.”

O Lord, render each of us faithful to the death, that “we may at last receive a crown of life;” enable us all whether male or female so to occupy our time and talents that when our Master appears we may receive him with exceeding joy. **AMEN.**

MINISTERIAL LABOR AND SUPPORT :

A

SERMON,

**PREACHED AT MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT, FEBRUARY 21, 1810, AT THE
ORDINATION OF**

HENRY DAVIS, D. D.

**AND HIS INDUCTION AS PRESIDENT OF
THE COLLEGE.**



*Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy
Ghost hath made you overseers.....ACTS. XX. 28.*

*And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown
of glory that fadeth not away.....I. PETER, V. 4.*

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2 C

MINISTERIAL LABOR AND SUPPORT.



2 CORINTHIANS XI. 23.

In labors more abundant.

THE traveller, as he draws near the end of his course, feels a pleasure in retracing the different stages through which he passed; in revolving in his own mind the dangers he escaped, the inconveniences to which he submitted, and the obstacles which he surmounted in performing his journey: It is a gratification to the laborer at the approach of evening to recollect the various toils of the day; to take a retrospect of the hardships he endured, of the discouragements under which he was supported, and the success with which his labors were crowned: The soldier towards the conclusion of life, finds a pleasure in recollecting the various campaigns in which he served, the dangers he braved, the enemies he vanquished, and the victories he won in fighting the battles of his country. That "good soldier of Jesus Christ," that chief of champions in the cause of christianity, whose words we have been reading, frequently indulges himself in reflections of a similar nature. He appears to feel a satisfaction too great for utterance while he recounts the temptations he had resisted, the persecutions he had suf-

ferred, the toils he had endured, and the opposition to which he rose superior in advancing the cause of his Saviour and Lord. "In stripes above measure," he mentions, "in deaths often; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness; in watchings often; in hunger and thirst; in cold and nakedness," and as he relates in the words selected for our present discussion, "in labors more abundant."

By the *labors* mentioned in this verse we are not to understand any peculiar trial which happened to Paul as a man or a christian; they are designed to express his ardent, unceasing exertions as an apostle of the Lamb; his unremitting activity in propagating the gospel of his Master, and promoting the salvation of his fellow-men.— These great objects occupied his individual attention; they summoned into action all his energies of body and mind: He appeared to lose sight of his own ease and interest, and outward aggrandizement, and regarded himself as an infinite gainer if others became spiritually rich although at the expence of toil, and reproach and poverty to himself. Although the apostle sustained an extraordinary office in the church of the living God, yet his example is recorded for the imita-

tion of all who succeed him in the service of the altar. Reverend *fathers* and *brethren*, this subject is peculiarly interesting to you and to me. On this auspicious, solemn occasion, it cannot therefore be unseasonable, and perhaps may not be unprofitable to inquire what "labors" are incumbent on us as the ministers of reconciliation, and what is our encouragement for becoming "in labors more abundant."

May a coal from the celestial altar touch the lips and heart of the speaker, inspiring him with a frame answerable to the magnitude of the occasion on which we are convened; may it touch the heart of every ambassador of the cross in this assembly, exciting him to exclaim in the language of the apostle, "the love of Christ constraineth me; I count not my life dear unto myself so that I may finish my course with joy, and—testify the gospel of the grace of God."

1. Ministers of the gospel ought to *labor* privately in the ardent prosecution of their studies; they should exercise an unwearied industry in improving their ministerial gifts, and thus becoming more qualified for discharging the duties of their important station. It is a very erroneous opinion, too frequently entertained, that the necessity of study in a great measure ceases when we are admitted to the capacity of public teachers. In schools of human learning and in seminaries of theology we can only lay the foundation, upon which the superstructure:

must afterwards be reared up by diligent application in private. The largest fund of knowledge which we can collect in the preliminary parts of our education for the ministry must soon be exhausted unless it be replenished by reading, by reflection, and other means of information. God forbid that I should be understood to represent literary attainments as the most important qualification, or even of equal importance with real grace in the ambassador of Jesus Christ; yet I may venture to assert that every species* of learning when sanctified by the Ho-

* Those who deny the utility of learning to the christian ministry, not only oppose the opinion of the most eminent divines, but the practice of the church in the days of her greatest purity and glory. It is satisfactorily proved by Bishop STILLINGFLEET that in the times of Samuel, schools were established in Ramah, and other parts of Judea in which youth of apparent piety and prominent talents were taught the learning of the age, and that "God ordinarily called out of these schools those whom he employed in the prophetic office:" he adds "therein their only employment was to cultivate their natural faculties, to improve in knowledge, and true piety: the greatest part of the exercises of those who were educated in the schools of the prophets were instructions in the law and the solemn praises of God."—*Sacrae Originis*, vol. 1.—181-2 Ox. ed.

Irenius, who flourished in the second century, mentions that a school of sacred literature was founded at Smyrna under the direction of Polycarp, a Father in the primitive church: Eusebius, as quoted by Lardner, relates that such an institution was early established in Alexandria over which Pantænus presided, who was succeeded by St. Clement, and that after him followed Origin; that the latter particularly instructed the youth "in logic, physics, geometry, astronomy, and ethics: he encouraged them likewise to read all sorts of ancient authors, poets and philosophers; but above all he inculcated a diligent attention to the mind of God revealed in the prophets; he himself likewise explained to them difficult passages."—*Lard. cred. vol. 3.*—26-7. *Lon. ed.* Public schools, for the same purpose, appeared soon after the reformation, in almost every protestant country: and perhaps there is no more favorable presage for the rising respectability of the ministry, and the future prosperity of the churches in our own country, than the erection of similar seminaries by different denominations of christians.

ly Ghost, will materially aid him in supporting the dignity, and discharging the duties of his office. No man can become too learned for the ministry of reconciliation. Every new acquisition of knowledge will enlarge the sphere of usefulness. There is nothing in the vast range of human science which may not be converted to the service of the sanctuary, either for the illustration and establishment of the truth, or the exposure and refutation of error. By an extensive acquaintance with learning common and divine the herald of the gospel becomes "a workman that need not be ashamed;" he is rendered capable of "giving a reason of the hope that is in him; of evincing the reasonableness of that gospel which is the charter of all *his hopes*: and is thus qualified for confounding if he cannot actually convince the *enemies of the cross*. It is obvious therefore that even in the age of inspiration literary acquirements were honored by Jehovah the Spirit for the greater edification of the church. "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and he was employed as the first and principal penman of the Old Testament scriptures; and Paul, who "had been educated at the feet Gamaliel," preached much more and wrote much more than any of the other evangelists or apostles. But a knowledge of sacred literature; a profound, universal acquaintance with the holy scriptures is of prime importance, and should be sought with preeminent

ardor by all who "serve at the altar."— While other books are permitted to attend as ministers of state, the bible should be elevated to the throne in our studies; while they are regarded as satellites revolving and shining in their respective orbits, the bible should be considered as the sun which enlightens and cherishes the whole system.— "Search the scriptures," is the command of the Lord God to all his professed followers, but it is directed with peculiar emphasis to those who serve him in the gospel of his Son. They are entrusted with immortal souls of their own, and ought therefore to search the scriptures as a means divinely appointed for their own sanctification and comfort; they are employed by "the chief Shepherd" for promoting the salvation of others, and ought "to search them" as a means of qualifying them for the interesting work. Our great reformers considered the sacred oracles in the original languages as constituting the chief subject of study to those who were separated to the labors of the gospel. It was the maxim of Luther, that the man "most acquainted with his bible was the most accomplished divine."— Beza in his eighteenth year repeated the Psalms of David and the epistles of Paul in Hebrew and Greek; and Witsius, at an advanced period of his life, could rehearse almost any verse of the Old and New Testament in the original languages.

Need I apologize for repeating the remark,

that application to study, and particularly to the study of the sacred oracles, constitutes an essential part of ministerial labor? It is required that "the lips of the priest should keep knowledge," and that the people "should" seek "the law at his mouth," but can we communicate to others knowledge which was never possessed by ourselves? Is he capable of "dividing aright the word of truth," who has not patiently and painfully investigated that truth? Can any man as "a steward of the mysteries of godliness" make a proper or profitable distribution of these for the use of the family who has not endeavored to explore these mysteries, viewing them both in their separate importance and intimate connexion? Can it be expected that he will bring from "this treasure things new and old" whose understanding has not been liberally stored with this treasure by reading and meditation? The minister of religion "is set for the defence of the gospel," but can he execute that awful trust who has never learned to wield those weapons by which "the defence" must be made, and every adversary driven from the field; who has not profoundly investigated the gospel; who is not master in some measure of those evidences, external and internal, on which its authenticity rests; who has never traced the predictions and promises of the Old Testament to their literal and luminous accomplishment in the New; who has not contempla-

ted the ceremonies and sacrifices of the former dispensation as immediately pointing to, and exclusively centering in "Jesus of Nazareth," the great antitype, the real "Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world?" *Ezra*, although a scribe divinely inspired, yet "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord" before he ventured "to teach statutes and judgments in Israel:" Solomon, the wisest of men, "gave good heed, and sought to find out acceptable words," and felt experimentally "his much study" to prove a "weariness to the flesh;" And Daniel, "a man greatly beloved," and favored with eminent manifestations of the Most High, understood by books, by a careful research into the writings of preceeding prophets, the divine purposes relative "to the desolations of Jerusalem."

2. We ought to "labor" by faithfully and zealously "preaching the gospel" in public. What should be our motive for prosecuting with unremitting industry our studies in the closet? Not merely to gratify an ardent thirst for knowledge, or to improve the understanding by the discovery of truths formerly unknown; not to acquire the reputation of polished scholars, or eminent divines. Nobler motives ought to actuate, and will actuate all who are called of Jehovah to the ministry of reconciliation. That same zeal for their Master's glory which rouses them to diligence in making preparation in private, will rouse them to equal diligence in

seizing every opportunity for promoting the gospel abroad. Animated by the same spirit, and aiming at the same object with the great apostle, each faithful "laborer" will be ready to exclaim, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you: I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory:" He will religiously consecrate all his gifts, every talent, whether natural or acquired, to his Master's use in the conversion of souls, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Knowledge thus occupied becomes the glory of the individual, and subserves the interest of Zion. Money locked up in a trunk, or buried in the earth, is neither profitable to the owner, nor to others, but when judiciously circulated proves a source of revenue to him, and tends to the convenience and advantage of others. A lamp however replenished with oil, or however carefully trimmed, is useless if "concealed under a bushel," but when placed on an eminence diffuses light to all around: Thus all our ministerial qualifications, our gifts and graces however improved, are profitable only as they are devoted to the edification of the church. All the spoils which the royal David obtained in his conquest of the nations around were consecrated to the service of the literal temple, and all the knowledge which we acquire by

meditation, by the study of books, whether sacred or profane, should be exclusively consecrated to the service of the spiritual temple ; either in unfolding the mysteries of redemption or in dispensing them to the household of faith. We are naturally prone to extremes ; while some are too negligent in their previous studies ; while they prostitute in sloth or secular employments hours which ought to be occupied in preparing for their public administrations, and thus rush presumptuously* into the pulpit ; others again spend in studies not immediately connected with their office, hours which might be employed more usefully in active service, "teaching from house to house," or publishing the gospel of peace where openings are presented. While Paul admonishes Timothy his son "to give attendance to reading ; to meditate upon these things, that his profiting might appear to all," he adds with equal solemnity, "preach the word ; be instant in season and out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine."

Excuse me if I make a digression from

* The following anecdote, related of the great and good Mr. Bradbury, will be gratifying to every reader, but it is peculiarly instructive to those who labor in the gospel. An acquaintance having called upon him at an advanced period of life, and found him intensely occupied in study, and seemingly impatient at the interruption, remarked that "certainly it could cost him but little trouble to prepare for the pulpit having been so long in the habit of preaching ;" to which the venerable divine with an air of pleasantry replied, "I always endeavor to have an Isaac on the altar ; if the Lord God is pleased to provide a lamb for the burnt offering, I thankfully accept it."

the subject by remarking, that in forming our discourses for the pulpit we cannot imitate a more excellent model than the "great apostle; that master-builder" in the New Testament temple, "I have determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified:" The Son of God, in his atonement, and righteousness, and intercession, is the "alpha and omega" of a sinner's hope; he is the consolation and glory of the church militant; he is the consolation and glory of the church triumphant, and should therefore constitute "the beginning and ending" of all our discourses, whether from the pulpit or the press. Elegant diction may please the ear; brilliant composition may amuse the fancy; nice, ingenious disquisition, on different subjects, may improve the understanding, but it is the plain, practical, powerful, may I not add, unadorned exhibition of Jesus and his salvation, which usually proves effectual for arresting the conscience, for forming the heart, and ultimately saving the soul: And ought we not to deplore, and deplore with tears, that in so many pulpits dissertations merely moral, or a species of subtle, metaphysical speculation are substituted for the "simplicity of the gospel of Christ:" And we need feel no hesitancy in asserting that a sermon which does not exhibit Jesus and redemption through his blood, however exquisitely prepared, or eloquently preached, is an insult to perishing sinners, and a pros-

titution of our sacred function. The parent is a thousand fold more consistent who professes solicitude for the welfare of his child, and yet offers it "a scorpion for an egg; a stone instead of" nourishing "bread," or conducts it when athirst to some stale, putrid cistern, rather than the living, overflowing fountain. Is there any thing in the cold region of moral science, or metaphysical speculation, to soothe the conscience when set on fire by the lightnings of the law, or agitated by fearful apprehensions "of the wrath to come? Is there any thing *here* to support the drooping pilgrim, and animate him in his career to glory, when his "comforter has withdrawn" and "the candle of the Lord" scarcely sheds a glimmering ray on his path? Besides, we are not initiated into the ministry "to preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and that not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."—"Saul of Tarsus was no mean man:" he was no contemptible scholar; his natural genius was sublime; his mind, originally great, was expanded by every species of learning; his eloquence was bold and commanding; his imagination excursive and towering; his powers of reasoning were strong, and grasped every thing that lay within the intellectual range. Yet all these accomplishments, natural and acquired, he resigns at the foot of the cross, and desires to "become nothing that Jesus may be all and in

all : We preach Christ crucified," he says, "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them that are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Charmed with the surpassing importance and glory of this subject, he devoutly exclaims, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord : Filled with a holy indignation against any thing that would offer to intrude itself as a substitute for this subject, he mentions again, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world."

I have felt a greater confidence in enlarging on this subject, from a consideration that these doctrines of the cross, in their native, artless simplicity, constituted *the faith* of the forefathers of this audience ; that *faith* which they openly avowed while they lived, and which they deemed it their duty, and glory, and joy to bequeath as the most precious legacy to their offspring. The assembly which I am now honored to address, have in general descended from a *host* of the most ardent, enlightened, disinterested champions in the cause of evangelic truth : a *host* who *resisted* to the loss of their property, their liberty, and in some instances of their lives, in "contending for that faith which was once delivered to the saints;" who in their attachment to the gospel, in its purity and

simplicity, bartered the charms of civilized Europe for a precarious, perilous retreat in the woods of America. A brighter constellation* never adorned, or blessed our world since the age of apostles.

3. We ought to labor by occasionally visiting and catechising *the flocks* which we are appointed *to oversee*. The importance of this part of ministerial service has been acknowledged in the purest periods of the church. The instruction of mankind, particularly of the rising generation, in this manner has usually revived with the revival of religion in all ages, and occupied the attention of those who attained to any considerable distinction either for piety or usefulness. It is the opinion of learned expositors, that so early as the ministry of the apostles divine truth was arranged into the form of question and answer as the most convenient and successful method of communicating knowledge. Paul thus admonishes Timothy, "hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and love;" again, "continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, knowing from whom thou hast learned them." The mode of conveying religious instruction by catechising was adopted by the immediate suc-

* Those who charge the author with an extravagant partiality for the original settlers of New-England, may consult the *History of the Puritans* by Mr. Neal, Dr. Calamy and others. Nay, the most honorable testimony has been borne to their talents, their learning, their piety, their zeal by some even of their intolerant persecutors.

cessors of the apostles, and some of the most eminent lights in the primitive church were chiefly distinguished for their zeal and ability in that part of ministerial labor. No sooner had Zion begun to emerge from the gloom of antichristian night, and recover her former purity and glory than reformers directed their attention to this duty, and almost every protestant church prepared catechisms for the instruction of its particular members. Unless our people are rationally instructed and firmly established in the doctrines of christianity we cannot expect them to "remain steadfast and unmovable." A professor of religion, without a rational, profound acquaintance with the great principles of that religion, is like a ship without ballast, or a tree without roots, ready to be overturned by every wanton gale, and perhaps there is no mean by which this knowledge can be so successfully infused as by the ordinance of catechising. A sermon exhibits the doctrines of revelation only in general terms, and therefore, however plain the language, or natural the arrangement, it is ordinarily above the capacity of the ignorant and young. A hearer must possess some acquaintance with the system of divine truth, before his knowledge will probably be much promoted from the pulpit. Besides, a public discourse is addressed to the congregation at large, and however vehemently pressed home by the preacher, a careless hearer is disposed to make the ap-

plication to any other rather than himself; but in catechising, the minister can communicate his message in a manner level to the meanest capacity; he may, without the least indignity to himself or the ordinance, repeat the same truth again and again; he may vary his expression and impart the same sentiment in different language, so that none can misunderstand; he can bring the message home immediately to the conscience, and has thus a greater opportunity of instructing the ignorant, of rousing the attention of the secure, of stripping the mask from the hypocrite, of answering the objections of opposers, and of solving the doubts and animating the hopes of inquiring souls. It was probably in this exercise that Paul was occupied towards the conclusion of his ministry at Rome. He is represented by the sacred historian as "dwelling in his own hired house, and receiving all that came to him, teaching those things which concern our Lord Jesus Christ." And in his departure from Ephesus he appeals to the elders of that church, that he "had kept nothing back, but had taught them publicly and from house to house."

Diligence in catechising "the flocks, over which the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers," is thus an important part of ministerial labor; a service sanctioned by the example of apostles, and of those who have imbibed most liberally the spirit of apostles in different ages of the church: "Wherefore

holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," I would embrace this public, interesting occasion for impressing not merely *you*, but more especially *my own soul* with the importance of this duty : Let us hear it enforced in the very language of three of the holiest men, and most laborious, successful ministers of the periods in which they respectively lived ; men " whose praise is in all the churches," and will flourish in the church while the church flourishes in the world. " Ministers of the gospel," one* of them expostulates, " think not that all your work is in your studies and pulpits ; you are *shepherds* and must know every sheep, and mark their straying, and help to bring them home : Learn of Paul not only to " teach your people publicly, but from house to house ;" inquire how they grow in knowledge and holiness, and on what they build their hopes for salvation ; see whether they worship God in their families, and teach them how to do it." A second† remarks, " prudence will direct us to lay a good foundation of knowledge by catechising our people, and instructing them in the principles of christianity, without which our labors will be in vain. This is " the master piece of a Master builder." You can never adopt a better plan for securing success to your labors than the fruitful way of catechising. What age ever produced more

* BAXTER's Saint's Rest, p. 160.

† FLAYEL's Evangelical Pastor.

lively and steadfast christians than the first ages? and then the care of this duty most eminently flourished in the churches. Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, Optatus, Basil, Austin, and Ambrose were all catechists." A third[†] remarks, and it adds peculiar force to his observations on this subject that they were among his last expressions, uttered in the prospect of a speedy and solemn appearance at the judgment seat of his Lord, "I lament that I have not attended more frequently societies for prayer, and that I have not been more diligent in catechising children in my congregation. I am persuaded that these exercises are some of the best which ministers can use for promoting the welfare of souls, and it would be happy for the church if the zeal and care of her ministers were more exercised about these things."

4. We ought to labor by going abroad as opportunity is afforded, and conveying the message of salvation to those who are destitute. It is readily acknowledged that when a minister is ordained to the pastoral care of a particular congregation, among them his time and talents ought principally to be employed. They are a charge immediately committed to him by "the Great Shepherd;" at his hand their souls will be required, and consequently for their salvation his *prayers*, his *tears*, his *watchings*, his

[†] The posthumous works of Mr. Brown, a late professor of divinity in Scotland.

fastings ought chiefly to be devoted. Yet his labors are not exclusively to be occupied among them. Although he is ordained the pastor of a particular church he does not cease to be a minister of the church universal, and the latter still possesses a claim to a portion of his labors, as circumstances admit. Wherever, therefore, a field unoccupied may appear within his reach, there the spiritual *sover* ought readily to enter, throwing around him the "incorruptible seed of the word." Our commission not only authorizes, but obliges us "to preach the gospel to every creature ; to be instant in season and out of season, to go out into the highways and hedges compelling them to come in to the feast of the gospel." This practice may be derided by some as "methodism," and "enthusiasm." Would to God that such "methodism," such "enthusiasm" was more fashionable among us. Our Master would be more glorified ; the boundaries of his church more enlarged ; the triumphs of his cross more multiplied, and our own glory and joy more advanced. Besides, did not the compassionate Jesus "go about doing good ?" Did he not feel constrained "to pass through Samaria" that he might instruct a solitary woman ? Did not Paul consider himself a "debtor to the Greeks and the barbarians ; to the wise and the unwise, longing to impart some spiritual gift ? Did not Philip the evangelist travel a considerable journey, that he might teach a

single Ethiopian in the method of salvation? and in his return "did he not preach in all the villages whither he went?" This is a duty peculiarly incumbent on us, because perhaps there is not a part of the globe where itinerant labors may be performed with more ease, or greater probability of success than in the country where we reside. "Lift up your eyes," fellow laborers, and behold on the east, and the west, and the north, what an extensive, almost unbounded field opens to our view: "A field white already to harvest." The inhabitants of our new settlements use the same language with ourselves, therefore the road to their instruction is more open; they are generally inquiring after the truth, and ready to embrace with open arms and affectionate hearts those who appear to communicate among them the knowledge of salvation. "How beautiful upon their mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation!" Rarely have I enjoyed happier days than in my occasional excursions through those uncultivated regions: Rarely have I felt greater freedom of utterance, or greater elevation of soul than in "preaching" among their desolate inhabitants "the unsearchable riches of Christ." All the toil to be undergone in travelling from place to place, and the little inconvenience arising from want of suitable accommodations are re-

warded a thousand fold by that affection which is expressed for the person, and that attention which is paid to the ministrations of the messenger of peace : Rarely have I witnessed greater eagerness in crowding to the ordinances of grace, more solemn, silent attention, deeper awakenings of conscience, or more tender meltings of heart under the message of reconciliation than in my itinerant labors through the frontier settlements. Every hearer apparently hangs upon the lips of the speaker, eager to catch the word of life as it is uttered. The standard of the cross is rarely erected among them, and all are seemingly anxious to press to it ; the tidings of salvation seldom resound through their abodes, and are therefore heard with greater transports of gratitude and joy. O brethren, had we been more "zealous for the Lord God of hosts," and more solicitous about the souls of men, our labors might have been "much more abundant" both at home and abroad ; Our particular "vineyards might have been better cultivated," and "the wilderness," through our means, have become "fair as Eden, and fruitful as the garden of the Lord."

Such are the duties incumbent upon us as "servants of the Most High God," and while we contemplate their variety, their arduousness, we may reasonably ask, "who is sufficient for these things ?" To mention some considerations which may tend to encourage was the second branch of our dis-

course ; and to this your attention is now invited.

1. We may derive encouragement from the infinitude of our Master's fulness, and the repeated assurances that he is ever ready to communicate. "In him," the Mediator of the covenant, "it hath pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell," and, thanks be to his name, as duty is arduous this grace will be imparted. Are we ignorant incapable of exploring the windings of the human heart, or exhibiting the mysteries of redemption with that skill which appears requisite for ensuring success? "He possesses all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ;" and to them who humbly depend on his teaching he will impart a measure of knowledge proportioned to the work allotted for them. Are we weak in body? are our feeble frames, "through their often infirmities," ready to sink beneath the pressure of public and private duty? Jesus whom we serve, is Jehovah, "who fainteth not, neither is weary" by any possible exertion, and his omnipotence is pledged for our support: Amidst all those discouragements which can arise from the frailty of the flesh, and fatigue in the discharge of duty, he meets us with that reviving interrogatory, "hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? hath it not been told thee from the beginning? hast thou not the testimony of apostles, of martyrs, of reformers, of my faithful followers in every preceding generation,

that the everlasting God, the Lord fainteth not, neither is weary ; that he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength ;” and thousands from their own experience can attest the truth of these promises. “ Out of weakness they have often become” sensibly “ strong :” When they have ascended the pulpit, or gone abroad “ in their labors of love,” tottering through bodily frailty, or trembling through a consciousness of inward insufficiency, strength has been almost miraculously imparted ; they have been enabled to perform the service in a manner most honorable to themselves, and acceptable and edifying to others. Read, “ ye ministers of our God,” read in the hour of despondency the golden legend of those who have gone before us in the labors of the gospel, and their triumphs in all difficulty by strength communicated from Jesus Jehovah their living head : Read the history of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Sampson, and of Jephthæ ; of David also, of Samuel, and of the prophets ; who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” Are we occasionally discouraged from an impression that imperfection attends our best services ; that we neither study, nor pray, nor preach with

an earnestness and solemnity becoming our sacred function? Jesus, by whom we are called to the office, is "Jehovah our righteousness and advocate;" his blood is everlastingly meritorious for the remission of all our failures, and he ever lives, ever intercedes to make the application of these merits: Does joy frequently depart from our hearts, and sleep from our eyes through the melancholy apprehension that "Israel is not gathered by our means; that we are laboring in vain, and spending our strength for nought and in vain?" Jesus, in whose service we are employed, is a "most merciful and faithful High Priest:" He knows by experience the bitterness of "laboring in vain," and is infinitely compassionate to sympathize in all our sorrows: Our tears may not soften the obdurate hearts of our hearers, yet they are carefully numbered by Him, and "laid up in his bottle:" The sighs which often heave our bosoms may not produce in them one pang of remorse, one emotion of sorrow; yet they enter the ears of our divinely compassionate Lord: Our most pointed admonitions, and affectionate entreaties may rebound back like arrows from the wall of adamant, yet "they are graven as with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond" in his heart for ever.

2. We may derive encouragement from the assurance of success to accompany our labors. Rarely, perhaps never, is the upright, faithful servant of the sanctuary left

without some fruits of his ministry, either in one period of his life or another. Every particle of grain, which the natural husbandman deposits in the earth, may not spring up and bear fruit, and sometimes the whole field may be apparently blasted; yet these instances are rare, and out of the ordinary course. The husbandman who is industrious and prudent is usually prosperous. He who is careful to prepare the soil; who endeavors to put in the best seed in the best season is, for the most part, rewarded with a liberal harvest. As it is with the natural, it is usually with the spiritual husbandman. The servant of Jesus, who is "in labors more abundant;" most diligent in his studies, trying to find out the most seasonable truths, and the most acceptable words for conveying them; most circumspect in his private walk "that the ministry be not blamed;" most vigilant in promoting the spiritual interests of his flock, *watching* over each family and individual as one who expects "to give account;" most importunate in prayer to the Holy Ghost for his blessing on every administration, is ordinarily the most abundant in success. "The word of the Lord," thus honestly dispensed "rarely returns altogether void," but is accompanied with some happy effect either for conversion or edification. Perhaps our labors are much more successful than we generally apprehend. Our message is probably effectual for imparting light to those who complain

of spiritual darkness ; for animating some who endure a "fiery conflict" with their own corruptions ; for ministering consolation to some broken, disconsolate hearer ; for supporting the weak and establishing the wavering, in a thousand instances of which we shall receive no intimation until it is told us in the region of glory. So intimate is the connexion between appropriate means and the end, that the establishment of a faithful ministry in a congregation is a certain pledge that there are souls to be saved there. The Apostles were thus enjoined to remain in Corinth, "for," saith Jehovah, "I have much people in this city."

3. We may derive encouragement from the prospect of an unutterable, eternal reward in the world to come. Our condescending Lord, who knows the difficulty of our work, and the numerous discouragements to which we are exposed, animates us to persevere by the promise of "glory, a weight of glory, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory : a glory" to be enhanced by all the toil, and poverty, and suffering which we now endure "for his sake." Although he has promised a heaven of blessedness to all his followers ; a crown to every "soldier who overcomes, and an inheritance" for all who are heirs by adopting grace, yet he reserves a brighter crown, and a larger inheritance for those who disinterestedly serve him in the work of the gospel. While "they that be wise shall shine as the

brightness of the firmament, they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the STARS for ever and ever."

Fathers and brethren, are we occasionally borne down by the pressure of arduous, and complicated duties? do we feel "much study to prove a weariness to the flesh," and become impatient under this part of ministerial labor? Is our love often rewarded with ingratitude, and are we ready to relax our diligence "in well doing?" Doomed perhaps to poverty of outward condition, or embarrassed unavoidably with the cares of life are we tempted to behold with an envious eye others living in ease, and rolling in all the affluence of the world? Amidst these trying discouraging circumstances lift up your eyes, and contemplate those glories which shall hereafter be revealed; realize that public, honorable testimony which will be given to all your fidelity and zeal in the hour of retribution. Inviting you to a station on his right hand, the judge will mention *openly* all the fatigue to which you now submit, and the efforts which you now make for the advancement of his interest; after he has taken a minute survey of all your prayers, your tears, your anxieties, your exertions for the spread of his gospel; and the promotion of his glory; after he has related these to his Father, and attending angels, he will announce with an air of affection neither to be described, nor conceived at present, "Well done, good and faith-

ful servants: Ye which have followed me in the regeneration, I appoint unto you a kingdom as my father hath appointed unto me." Who would not run for such a "prize?" Who would not "strive for such a mastery?" Who would not become "in labors more abundant" for the acquisition of such a "palm, a throne, a crown, a kingdom?" Be encouraged, therefore, "holy brethren, to feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind," in the anticipation "that when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Your own imaginations have probably suggested the most suitable application of this doctrine.

1. May we not infer from this subject that in the ministerial office there is no room for sloth or carnal indulgence? Some have been induced to assume this awful station from the prospect of temporal ease, and gratification. Too indolent to perform the duties of any other calling they have sought in the service of the altar a retreat from difficulty and toil. From such "apostles and pastors" may the Lord God, in tender mercy, preserve his church; men who have not deliberately "counted the cost" and who are not therefore prepared "to spend and be spent" in the arduous, interesting work. I say from such "apostles and pastors" may

the Lord in mercy preserve his church, because an indolent, unqualified, unconscientious ministry should be deprecated as her greatest curse: It almost necessarily diffuses the contagion of spiritual disease and death wherever its influence extends. Besides, the very nature of this office; the variety of duties enjoined on those who embark in it, and the names by which they are uniformly distinguished in scripture all unite in exposing the presumptuousness, and infatuation of such imposters. Are they not called "stewards," to shew that they should be always ready to wait "upon the household of God," imparting "milk to the spiritual babe, and strong meat to those who have attained to the stature of men?" Are they not designated "laborers, and laborers even in harvest," a season in which the most ardent, unremitting industry, is expected? Are they not denominated "workmen," yea, "workers together with God, who neither slumbers nor sleeps?" Are they not characterised "overseers and watchmen," to instruct us that their eyes should be always open, their attention ever awake to the spiritual interests of the flock committed to their care? Are they not exhibited in scripture under the emblem of "stars," to intimate that they should be always revolving in their orbits, and still shining as they roll along? What is the history of a Paul, a Peter, and the other apostles but a history of their "travels, their watchings,

their fastings, their perils by sea and by land," their zeal in public instructing the multitude, or their fervor in secret wrestling with the Holy Ghost for his blessing on their labours? "The minister of the sanctuary," if actuated by the spirit of his office, may find employment for every moment of his time in discharging the different duties of his calling. No vigor of body is more than sufficient to bear up under those exertions which he is occasionally called to make. No learning can be too various, too profound for understanding and illustrating, in all its connexions, the vast scheme of revelation; that which first dawned in paradise: which shone with increasing lustre during the age of patriarchs and prophets; which burst forth with still greater glory at the birth and death, more especially at the resurrection and ascension of our blessed Lord; which will be receiving additional evidence from every movement of divine providence until "the mystery of God is fully finished" at the consummation of all things: No application to study can be too patient, too persevering for bringing out of the sacred "treasure," from sabbath to sabbath, "things new and old" for the use of the spiritual family. How explicit, therefore, how awful is the admonition of Paul to Timothy is son? "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom: Preach the word;

be instant in season, out of season ; Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist."

2. Are we not reproved by this example of the great apostle, for our own indolence and unprofitableness as "laborers in the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts?" When we realize the solemnity of our station ; when we consider the duties which we ought to have performed, and which, by a becoming diligence in our callings, we might have performed, must we not acknowledge that we fall infinitely short? Have we *labored* in our closets, and endeavored by reading and meditation to acquire that knowledge which is requisite for the responsible and profitable discharge of our ministry? Have we diligently cultivated our graces ; aspiring after higher attainments in faith, in love, in humility, in hope, in tenderness for the souls of men, and in zeal for our Master's glory? Have not many hours been unnecessarily spent in conversation with our families ; or in the society of our friends, which we might have usefully employed, examining our own hearts, or pleading with the Divine Spirit for wisdom to deal successfully with the hearts of others, or in searching the sacred oracles to learn, by a comparison of scripture with scripture, "how to divide aright the word of truth, and give to all their portion of meat in due season?" Have we proceeded from the *labors* of the closet to the pulpit "in the fulness of the blessing of the

gospel of Christ, regardless of every other consideration than the salvation of our hearers? Have we, as leisure was afforded, gone abroad from settlement to settlement, dispensing *the bread of life* to those who were languishing with spiritual hunger? Ah, brethren, it may be our shame now, and if sorrow could mingle with the joys of paradise, it must be our sorrow there, that we are so indifferent in performing the duties of a station the most interesting and responsible in which mortals can be placed. Men are not inactive or unconcerned in the other occupations of life. The patriot does not slumber when the rights of his country are invaded: He rises "from his bed of ivory," he girds on his armor, he sacrifices his own ease, he hazards his own life in avenging her wrongs. What oceans have not been navigated; what countries have not been explored; what toil has not been endured; what dangers have not been encountered by "the children of this world" in the pursuit of their favorite objects! Now, we see them burning beneath a southern sun, again, shivering in the frozen regions of the north for the acquisition of the bubble of earthly honor or gain; a bubble which vanishes as it is grasped, and eludes their fond expectations; and yet can we be indolent or indifferent in a cause in which the honor of our Master, the salvation of our brethren by nature, and our own felicity and glory for eternity are immediately involved? Me-

thinks I see the condescending Saviour pointing to the *manger* where he lay, shut out from the abodes of men, "to the wilderness where he was an hungred, to the garden" where he bled, *to the cross* on which he expired, and then asking, "is such your kindness to your Friend? Do you thus requite your compassionate, dying Lord? Do you believe that *you were redeemed* from eternal wrath, and rendered heirs of eternal glory, "not by silver or gold, but by my precious blood," and yet are you slothful in my service?" For my own part, I never survey the months and years of my life that are past without the most profound humiliation and regret: How much might I have done for my own soul, and for the souls of others, in moments which have been wasted in idleness, or in pursuits not immediately connected with my office as a servant of Jesus Christ.

Men, brethren, and fathers—"The night is far spent;" by all, therefore, that is solemn in our ministerial vocation; by all that is interesting in the glory of that Jesus which we are appointed to promote; by all that is precious in the souls of fellow-immortals which we are set apart as the instruments of saving; by all that is august and elevating in those rewards of blessedness and honor which await *the faithful servant* of the cross; by all that is awful in the anticipation of being rejected as "unprofitable stewards," and having the "blood of others required at our hands," let us this

day be admonished "to lay aside every weight," whatever might embarrass in the discharge of duty, and aim at imitating the illustrious example which the text presents to our view. "By the grace of God this great apostle was what he was," and the same grace is as *plenteous* in our day, as it was in his : it is no less free for us, than for him. "He was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, an injurious person, but he obtained mercy" for himself and was employed for bringing others to a participation of the same mercy, why then may not we ask and receive from the same unexhausted treasure ? Like him "let us live by the faith of the Son of God, receiving from his mediatorial "fulness" the necessary "supply of every grace," and like him let us consecrate all our talents to the advantage of the "spiritual household." Our ministerial gifts will be always expanding and improving as they are employed. "To every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly." He who faithfully occupies the talent, already possessed, shall have his talent increased. It is almost incredible to what a pre-eminence of usefulness many have attained in the christian church, whose bodily constitutions were slender, whose intellectual powers were by no means extraordinary, and whose local situation was rather unfavorable for the cultivation of these powers. They have reached an elevation of rank, among the followers of the

Lamb, little inferior to that of reformers and martyrs. When we contemplate the active services of many in modern times, the labors of a Baxter, a Boston, a Brown, a Doddridge, an Edwards, an Elliot in visiting the sick, in "exhorting from house to house, in preaching the gospel through the week, and on the Sabbath, we are ready to conjecture that they were rarely in their studies, and when we take a review of the books which they have written, their number and excellence, we are ready to conclude that they were rarely out of them. All this pre-eminence of respectability and usefulness they attained by frugally collecting every fragment of their time, and humbly depending on the Holy Ghost for his influences to enlighten, and sanctify, and support. These illustrious personages, "although dead, yet speak" by their example, and could they address us this day from their mansions in glory, they would expostulate with us to shake off our lethargy, "to gird on the armor of light," and become more "valiant for the Lord God of hosts, and for our generation."

Brethren, the period in which we live is peculiarly eventful; but although the movements of divine providence are ominous, and, in some respects, awful, yet a thousand considerations rush upon our minds animating us to a holy zeal in the "labors of the gospel. Ancient predictions are receiving a rapid and glorious accomplishment in the

enlargement of Messiah's kingdom. Look around, and behold how "the desert has blossomed" within our own recollection, and under our own eyes; and "the wilderness," lately barren and dreary, is now waving with a profusion of golden fruit! New congregations are frequently formed in almost every direction; and, by a liberal supply of the Spirit of our ascended Lord, many of them are furnished with an evangelic, enlightened, laborious ministry. Do I not speak in moderation when I mention, that in a thousand instances in the northern and western parts of this state, and of a neighboring state, the very places where stood the hut of the Indian, are now consecrated by temples to the living God; temples crowded with peaceful, spiritual worshippers, and the howl of savage beasts, and the war-hoop of more savage men are succeeded by "songs of salvation, even praises to our God?" How rapidly is divine grace multiplying her trophies in other parts of the globe! While the Lord God, in a manner unusually awful, "is shaking the nations, the desire of all nations is visibly coming" in the wider extension of his kingdom, and the more luminous displays of his glory. Scarcely does a week revolve without bringing the intelligence of some other missionary field explored, and some other society organized for conveying "the testimony of Jesus" to nations which have neither "heard his fame, nor seen his glory." Lo! *the an-*

gel, foretold by the lip of ancient prophecy, has reached "the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to every—kindred, and tongue, and people;" and I see the apparently impenetrable gloom which had long enveloped the nations gradually breaking, and receding before its celestial light: I see the abject African, who had been formerly the sport of oppression, now swelling beyond the chain which galled him, and leaping, and exulting "in the glorious liberty of the sons of God:" I see the forlorn, cheerless Icelander, remote in the regions of the north, almost a stranger to the heat of the natural sun, now basking beneath the more genial, fostering rays of "the sun of righteousness:" I see the ruthless, wandering Arab arrested by the messenger of peace, and refreshed, on his burning sands, "with that river which makes glad the city of God," those living "streams of which they who" participate "shall thirst no more:" I see the stupid, sottish Hindoo, although a stranger to all the learning and refinements of this world, "made wise unto salvation through Jesus Christ," and preparing "to shine as the brightness of the firmament for ever and ever:" I see some rude idolater of almost every clime, rising from his fancied god, which he had ignorantly worshipped, and doing homage to Jehovah the only Creator and Lord: I see, in the conversion of a Sabat and Abdallah, "the first fruits" of the long deluded vota-

ries of Mahomed "to Jesus of Nazareth," the true prophet and Saviour of the world, and in the "martyred blood" of the latter I realize a seed for the christian church more numerous than the stars of heaven: I see, in the anxiety of the Eastern Jews, their eager research into ancient prophecy, a precious presage that while the Gentiles "from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South are pressing into the kingdom of God," the period is at hand "when all Israel shall also be saved: Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth; the isles and the inhabitants thereof: Let the wilderness, and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit; let the inhabitant of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. For behold, the Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." What eye does not sparkle with joy at the elevating scene? What bosom does not kindle with an ardor inextinguishable to aid in carrying on the important work? Whose gold and whose silver will not flow in the execution of any scheme, the result of which may probably be another source of glory to God, of exultation to angels, and salvation to millions of mankind who are yet unborn? "Ye servants of the most high God," who are now invading the empire of darkness in different and distant na-

tions, *all hail*. Although “we are absent from you in body, we are present in spirit,” and at every step that “the ark of the covenant” advances through your exertions we unite our acclamation with yours, **HITHER-TO HATH THE LORD HELPED**. We accompany you with our prayers night and day, that the Redeeming Angel may protect your persons, may give efficacy to your administrations, may cheer you, in the hour of conflict and peril, with his rich consolations, and enable you ultimately to “overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of your testimony :” With a heroism worthy of the Captain whom you serve, and the cause in which you are embarked, go on, in the sacred warfare, “conquering and to conquer, until you have borne the standard of the cross in triumph around the globe : With the angel’s ecstasy, reiterate in every region under heaven the message announced by the angel to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, “Behold, we bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be unto **ALL PEOPLE** ; For unto you is born in the city of David, a **SAVIOUR**, which is **CHRIST THE LORD**. Publish to the most rude, the most remote inhabitant of the earth, the reviving *record*, that “Jesus of Nazareth is a **PROPITIATION**—for the sins of the **WHOLE WORLD**.”

When I look around this vast assembly ; hundreds of whom I never saw before, and whom it may be, I shall never see on earth again, “my spirit is moved” with the most

tender solicitude about their eternal destiny. I am irresistibly borne forward in imagination to that occasion, when we must stand together at the "judgment-seat" of our common Lord, and I feel anxious for the station which each of you shall occupy in that dreadful, decisive hour. Dare I entertain, shall I entertain the pleasing hope of beholding you all placed on the right hand of the Judge, clothed in the flowing robes of his righteousness, shining in the beauties of holiness, carrying "palms in your hands," wearing "crowns upon your heads," and invited with angels and arch-angels to the possession "of his everlasting kingdom." Ah! are there not some; have we not reason to apprehend that there are many present who "have neither part nor lot" in that inheritance? Who have never undergone that change of heart, "that washing of regeneration, that renewing of the Holy Ghost, without which no man can see the Lord." Although the influence of the Divine Spirit have recently descended in liberal showers on various towns around, and apparently on many in this town, *they* have not descended on them. *Would to God*, that their eyes were opened to behold that sword of indignation which hangs unsheathed over their heads, and the horrors of that wrath to which they are exposed by transgression. *Would to God*, that they were enabled by faith to discover "that city of refuge" which is revealed in the gospel, and which all who enter are eternally safe.

Most willingly I embrace this opportunity "of espousing them all to one Husband," even Jesus the infinite surety, that hereafter they may stand before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Behold, I bring near his righteousness, and offer it for your immediate, unconditional reception, and as you consult your eternal welfare, put on without delay, put on with all affection "this garment of salvation." Clothed with this immaculate, infinitely precious robe you shall be accepted now, and saved for ever. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." How truly gracious the term, "believing on the Son," embracing his righteousness, submitting to his sceptre, relying on his atoning sacrifice for the remission of all offences, trusting to his covenant faithfulness, for the accomplishment of every promise; "He who thus believeth on the Son hath eternal life;" he receives the title in his immediate adoption; he is constituted, in the very moment of "his believing," he is constituted "an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus" the Mediator to all the blessings of grace and glory. As your brother by nature, your fellow-sinner by departing from the living God, let me expostulate with you to acquiesce in this plan of redemption. Do you expect, can you ask salvation by any scheme more eligible; a scheme more acceptable to the Father who ordained it, to the Son who accomplished it, to the Spirit of grace who applies it, or more appropriate to your own circum-

stances as sinners who have forfeited every claim to the mercy of God? "Choose you this day" on what terms you will transact with a holy, righteous, offended Sovereign. Will you throw down the weapons of your hostilities, and accept of Jesus in whom "Jehovah is reconciled?" or consulting the damning suggestions of proud, impious, infatuated reason *will you* carry on the warfare, and *rush* deliberately "on the thick bosses of his buckler? We are ambassadors for Christ," and wait to know the issue of our embassy: We wait to know whether the terms of negociation are acceptable: Whether the overtures of grace proposed on the part of heaven are acceded to, and ratified on your part. Were all the strangers to the covenant who are present; were twenty; was only one persuaded to accept of Jesus Christ for "righteousness and salvation," how joyful would be this occasion! Some attending angel would speedily convey the intelligence to the hosts above: Then all the angels of God would clap their wings, and they in concert with "the spirits of just men" before the throne burst forth in one universal, rapturous acclamation, let us "make merry and be glad:" For such a sinner in yonder sanctuary "was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found."

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, AMEN, praise ye the Lord."

LIFE
AND
IMMORTALITY

BROUGHT TO LIGHT THROUGH THE GOSPEL.

**THE SUBSTANCE OF TWO DISCOURSES, DELIVERED IN THE NORTH
DUTCH CHURCH, ALBANY : ONE BEFORE THE MISSION-
ARY SOCIETY, SEPT. 1, 1813 ; THE OTHER
BEFORE THE BIBLE SOCIETY,
FEB. 12, 1815.**

BY ALEXANDER PROUDFIT, D. D.
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, SALEM.

.....*Whatsoever doth make manifest is light.*.....**EPH. V. 13.**

SALEM :
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.....
1815.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY, &c.



2 TIMOTHY, I. 10.

*Who—hath brought life and immortality to
light through the gospel.*

“LIGHT is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eye to behold the sun.” How agreeable, how exhilarating to us, after being enveloped for hours in the gloom of the night, is the first perceivable dawn of the morning, when the prince of-day rises in the east diffusing light and joy over the natural world! Innumerable objects, which were formerly concealed, are then brought obviously to view, and we are aided in the prosecution of our various employments. The natural light, therefore, which is so pleasant and profitable to us as men; which cheers the eye of the beholder; which brings to view objects formerly veiled in darkness, and directs us in our ordinary pursuits, is fitly and frequently employed as an emblem of divine revelation. “Thy word,” says the royal poet, adoring his God for this light which has beamed on our benighted world, “thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path;” and an apostle, alluding to the same heavenly oracle, declares, “we have a more sure word of prophesy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark

place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." ' As the natural light is grateful to the eye of the body, this celestial lamp imparts joy to the intellectual eye ; by it also doctines the most interesting in relation to the perfections of Jehovah, to the mediation of Jesus, and to the future destinies of men, which must otherwise have remained in impenetrable darkness, are luminously revealed. " He hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

The *life* here mentioned by the apostle, does not signify merely a future, never ending existence. An eternal duration, unless connected with circumstances of happiness and glory, would be an object of dislike rather than of desire : The human mind necessarily recoils at the thought, as we startle back from a gulph to which we can discover neither bottom nor bounds : They who have perished without hope have the prospect of an immortal existence, but this prospect, instead of soothing their anguish, inconceivably augments it, and throws a deeper shade over the blackness of their darkness. The *life* mentioned in our text implies not only a being which shall never end, but all that can render this being desirable, the immediate vision of God, his intimate, uninterrupted fruition, an exemption from every species of pain, and the possession of all those pleasures, which our ever expanding powers are capable of enjoying.

The *immortality*, or as it might be translated, *incorruption* noticed by the apostle, relates immediately to the body, and expresses that perfection to which it will attain in its glorified state. Being redeemed in the present life from the demerit of sin, through the sacrifice and righteousness of the incarnate Jehovah, it will in the morning of the resurrection be redeemed from all the consequences of sin. Having then emerged from the bosom of corruption, it will no longer be subject either to dissolution or decay: Infirmities will not multiply upon the risen, glorified body with its advancement in age, as in the present, imperfect state; but it will flourish for ever in all the vigour and gayety of *youth*; of *youth* uncontaminated, and unenfeebled by transgression. "This corruption shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality."

This *life* and *immortality*, which the "gospel brings to light," should not be understood as referring exclusively to a future state, or expressing the privileges of the redeemed in the world to come: They may also be considered as comprehending all that is preparatory to that infinitely important result. Beneath the benign effulgence of celestial truth, we behold the building of mercy not only as completed in the heavenly world, but we see the foundation laid in eternity past: We see the scaffolding erected, all the means by which the superstruc-

ture is carried on through every intervening period of time, and all the dispensations of the church until it is consummated in eternity to come. On all these interesting realities the gospel has poured its radiance, and brought them clearly to human view. The eye, through the medium of evangelic light, may grasp, in its comprehensive range, the past, and the present, and the future; the whole scheme of redemption in its origin, and progress, and consummation; it can survey the whole plan as reflecting the highest glory on each attribute of Deity, exciting the astonishment of every order of holy intelligencies, and raising, from the lowest depths of degradation to the highest elevation of bliss, unnumbered millions of the family of man. "Life and immortality," in their origin and issue, "are thus brought clearly to light through the gospel."

What are the great doctrines disclosed in divine revelation, and what is imported in "bringing them to light," are inquiries naturally suggested in our text; and their solution is adapted to the occasion of our present meeting.

Scarcely two years have elapsed since I commenced the discussion of this subject in this church before the Northern Missionary Society: I rejoice in the opportunity of appearing an advocate for the destitute among ourselves, and for the still more pitiable heathen, by resuming the same subject be-

fore the Bible Society. The objects of both associations are substantially the same: The one contemplates the glory of Messiah in the extension of his kingdom by the gospel *read*, the other by the gospel *preached*: Through the instrumentality of one society, the celestial light beams on that eye which never saw his glory; through the instrumentality of the other, the "tidings of great joy" salute those ears which never heard his fame: and either ordinance, through the energies of Jehovah the Sanctifier, will prove omnipotent for the conversion of the soul to his grace.

It was already noticed, that by the *life and immortality* which the scriptures reveal, we are not to understand merely the consummation of the economy of grace, its ultimate design in the resurrection of the body and the felicities of the heavenly state; but also the various elementary parts of this plan, all that is preparatory to that sublime, interesting result.

1. The gospel has *brought to light* the transactions of Jehovah from eternity past in relation to the recovery of man. Amidst the radiance of inspired truth "the council of peace" rises obviously before us, and we see the coequal Three convened, devising, and determining the restoration of our fallen world: We see the volume of life spread open, and the Father with his own hand filling up its ample, mysterious pages: We see him setting down at the head of this

record his own Son as the Representative, and afterwards entering the names of that numerous offspring which shall be brought to glory through the perfection of his sufferings. Each Divine Person then appears assuming his particular office in the economy of grace, and undertakes to accomplish his proper work at the appointed time. Moved by mercy pure, unsolicited, unmerited, the Father ordains his beloved Son to be the Saviour of the world; promises to support him in the arduous work, and offers him millions of the human family as a reward for the degradation of Bethlehem, and the agonies of Calvary: Moved by mercy no less pure, unsolicited, unmerited, the Son, equal in perfection and glory, cheerfully embarks in this work, and, by making his soul a vicarious offering for sin, engages to vindicate the honors of the divine government, and of each divine attribute in the redemption of sinners: And the Spirit, co-equal with the Father and the Son, undertakes in the plenitude of his grace to sanctify and prepare for heaven all those whom the one had *elected* and the other should *redeem*: These are truths intimately connected with our present privileges and future prospects which the gospel brings clearly to light. *There* we see the plan fully drawn out by Jehovah in concert, and every circumstance respecting Jesus the Head, and the glory which should afterwards crown both him and his members minutely

and unalterably determined. We find the great design at that moment fully matured in the Infinite Mind; all its parts arranged by a wisdom which never miscalculates; upon which no intrigue either of man or angel can possibly impose; by a sovereignty which none without the most impudent impiety will dare to arraign, and by a power which no opposition either from earth or hell can resist, or even retard in its operations. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning," and being fully known, they shall all be executed in their proper order, at the appointed time, and by the most appropriate means. The apostle, penetrating by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost into the heavenly world; obtaining a foretaste of its joys, and a glimpse of its glories, traces all back to the sovereign, eternal purpose of God as the origin. "In hopes of eternal life which God that cannot lie promised before the world began." Yes, believer, it is a mystery of sovereignty and condescension and love which must fill thy heart and all heaven with wonder for ever, thou wast then *predestinated* that thou mightst afterwards be *called*; and thou wast *called* that thou mightst be *justified*, and being justified thou shalt be infallibly and everlastingly *glorified*.

2. The gospel brings to light various ordinances to be improved, and an important change which must be undergone, in order to prepare us for the actual enjoyment of this

“immortality and life.” Although divine sovereignty reigns in every part of the economy of our redemption, yet there is no collision between her prerogatives, and the freedom of human agency : Secondary causes are employed, and diligence on the part of the objects of mercy required as absolutely as if there was no purpose of the Father predetermining their salvation, or no operation of the Spirit predisposing them to improve that salvation. “Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth.” The Holy Ghost Jehovah *works* ; he *works* as a sovereign, and with an energy almighty and irresistible, and yet he works by his own word either read or heard as the important means. With this he imparts light to the darkened understanding, he agitates and alarms the slumbering conscience, and subdues to the obedience of faith the whole man : all who shall hereafter be admitted into the kingdom of heaven are *born again* ; “they are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, and yet they are *born* of the incorruptible seed, even the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. Faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, and yet this faith cometh by hearing” as the instituted and ordinary means. In these and innumerable other instances, the prerogatives of sovereign grace are kept uninvaded, and her glories appear unclouded as much as if no outward ordinances were used, and no

duty prescribed for the performance of man, and yet the instrument appears as prominent, and the sinner is called to work out his salvation as imperiously as if grace should possess no dividend of the glory at all. Divine sovereignty reigns now, and will reign for ever, to the exclusion of human merit, and the silencing of human boasting, as if there were no scriptures to be read, no sabbath to be sanctified, no sanctuary to be attended, no ministry of reconciliation to be improved, no baptismal water to be applied, no sacramental bread and wine to be received, and yet he who expects salvation in the wilful neglect of these institutions is as infatuated as the student who expects learning without reflection or reading, or the husbandman who expects his corn in autumn without planting it in spring, or the merchant who dreams of attaining to opulence without enterprise or industry, or the mariner who expects to reach the port of destination without offering his sails to the wind. The connexion between the means and the end is exquisitely nice, too mysterious for our contracted, clouded understandings to comprehend; yet the fact itself, the existence of such connexion is "brought clearly to light in the gospel:" and, reverend fathers and brethren, I trust that no apology is necessary, on the present occasion, for enlarging on this truth. It is fraught with instruction equally interesting to all, whether we stand in the rela-

tion of teacher or taught. While it admonishes those in private life "to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure," by improving every ordinance of religion, it admonishes us who serve at the altar to unwearied industry in promoting the salvation of others. While the wind bloweth where it listeth on the valley of vision," infusing life into the dry bones which are scattered around, it is only while we *prophecy* that the *rushing, mighty, vivifying breath* is to be expected. There is no possibility of the effect without the cause, and the cause usually operates by the appointed means. While Paul "became mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds," in repelling the prince of darkness, and erecting the standard of the cross in the very centre of his dominions; it was by wielding the *spiritual weapons*, by levelling against it the artillery of heaven that he succeeded in the arduous conflict. The intimate connexion between the means and the end is a part of the mystery of godliness, which ought on no occasion to be overlooked, but the exhibition of it, on occasions like the present, must appear particularly seasonable. We have contemplated with professions of sympathy the deplorable condition of the poor among ourselves, and the still more deplorable condition of the heathen; we have melted at the consideration that any should be "perishing with hunger" while there is living *bread* provided, "bread

enough and to spare," and we have associated for the purpose of sending them relief: But while we look with melted hearts and flowing eyes on their pitiable situation let us recollect that interrogatory of eternal truth, "how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach unless they are sent "and supported?" or how shall they "search the scriptures" unless these scriptures are translated into their language and circulated among them?

But this gospel, which brings to light the past and the present relative to the method of human salvation, also sheds its radiance on the future; it renders obvious to the eye of faith the formerly unknown and invisible world. We learn from the oracles of divine truth, that "as it is appointed unto all men once to die, after death" succeeds the judgment, an impartial, unalterable retribution of honor and happiness to the just, and of reproach and misery to the unjust. Yes, beloved in the Lord, through the medium of revelation we can look forward and see these *heavens set on fire*, these *elements dissolving with fervent heat*, and stars, and suns, and worlds all retiring to make room for the dread solemnities of the judgment-day: We see the throne erected, and the once despised, insulted Nazarene descending in all the grandeur of his divinity unveiled and sitting upon it: We see the grave surrendering its

peaceful prisoners, the ocean disclosing the bodies which had lain for ages in its watery caverns, and all the millions of the human family thronging with anxious solicitude to the *face of him who sitteth upon the throne*: We see the records of heaven laid open, those actions which had been done in a corner sounded in the hearing of all nations, and men, without the least deference to rank, or fortune, or any outward advantages, judged according to their works: We see the pitiable multitude of the damned standing on the left hand of the judge pale and ghastly, and at last retiring reluctantly to their own place; while the nations of the saved, with mingled shouts of exultation and thanksgiving, ascend with their Lord through the *air*, and take possession of that kingdom which he had prepared for them. The substance of "that life and immortality which the gospel brings to light," is contained in the following passages: "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from the other, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left:" Again, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and

remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord." Thrice splendid, thrice blessed assembly! may you and I, clad in the righteousness of Jesus as our robe, mingle in their society, and participate in their glories.

What is imported in bringing these doctrines to light was our second inquiry, and to this your attention is now respectfully invited. "He hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."—

1. *There* these great doctrines are clearly revealed, and incontrovertibly confirmed. All the speculations of unenlightened reason respecting a future state were only conjecture: her feeble eye, with its obscure, irregular light, could not penetrate the dark medium which intervenes between this and the future world, and ascertain *whether* man shall exist hereafter, or *where*, or *how*. Ancient sages among the heathen not only differed from each other on this interesting subject, but they often differed from themselves. Almost every new class of philosophers which appeared in the most flourishing ages of Greece and Rome entertained and avowed theories different from those who had preceded: some supposed that death was a perpetual torpor or sleep; others fancied to themselves Elysian fields, where the spirits of their departed heroes and sages should range abroad in the indulgence of sensual delights; others imagined that

the soul upon its separation from one body migrated to another, and still remained on the earth : But to their most profound inquirers an existence or happiness in a future state was the object rather of desire and hope, than of confident expectation. Whatever were the conjectures of heathen philosophers relative to the immortality of the soul, none entertained a belief of the resurrection of the body. An impenetrable gloom covered the region of the grave, and the body once brought under its dominions, they considered as doomed to perpetual imprisonment. These facts, however, which were doubted by some of the wise men among the heathen, and denied by others, and no more than conjectured by any, are clearly taught, and unquestionably confirmed in the volume of inspiration. The christian can look upon death as “disarmed” of its sting, as stripped of all its horrors through the death of his divine Redeemer, and all-conquering Prince : he can look upon the grave not as a dreary, cheerless dungeon, where his body must languish in everlasting chains, but as a peaceful retreat from all the toils and afflictions of this world, or rather as a bed of rest, where it will enjoy undisturbed repose until the morning of its redemption arrives ; and as he descends into the tomb every cloud is dissipated, every apprehension is quieted by that assurance of his Lord, “I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he

were dead, yet shall he live: I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death:" The christian, relying on these divine declarations, may exult in the elevated strains of the inspired poet, "my flesh also shall rest in hope: Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." While his body descends to the grave, softened and prepared for its reception, his immortal spirit, amidst a retinue of angels, soars aloft to the regions of bliss, and reclines on the bosom of its God.

Nay, we have not only the evidence of faith founded on the testimony of Jehovah to assure us of this *life and immortality*, but we have the evidence of sense as an additional confirmation. Enoch, in the age of the patriarchs, was translated without seeing death: the body of Elijah was miraculously transformed, and caught up to the celestial paradise; and although it was requisite that the Saviour should die, being substituted in the room of sinners, yet he afterwards arose as a pledge and pattern of their resurrection. The living God has thus brought "immortality to light," not merely to the eye of faith, but has in infinite condescension afforded outward, ocular demonstration.

As in the gospel the *doctrine* of "life and immortality" is clearly revealed—

2. *There its blessings* are indiscriminately

announced for the reception of all nations. The economy of grace, under the christian dispensation, is much more liberal than during the reign of the law, and tenders its benefits not to a particular kindred only, but to all the kindreds of mankind. The light of life, which was confined for ages within the limits of a single country, has now burst beyond these narrow boundaries, and is shedding its radiance on every quarter of the globe, and "making glad" with its influences all the nations of men. The prophet of the former dispensation was directed in his mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and was confined in his range to the inconsiderable region of Judea; but a more unlimited field for exertion opens to the view of the apostles and their successors, and a more extended, unqualified commission is put into their hands. They are fully authorized, and explicitly enjoined to go into ALL THE WORLD; "to preach the gospel to EVERY CREATURE, and thus bring them to the knowledge of "life and immortality;" to baptize, and thus introduce them to the visible communion of the faithful: There are no limits now prescribed to the herald of the cross, but the boundaries of the earth, and the assembly, which he is instructed to evangelize, comprehends every "nation under heaven." And while he goes forth, exploring the field which is opened before him, and fulfilling his high commission, he may be animated by that prophesy

and promise, "they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Messiah: The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts: Yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him." The ambassador of Jesus, and indeed every lover of Jesus, may look abroad to the east and to the south, and to the west and to the north, anticipating that peaceful, blissful, period when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation:" When "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;" tribes the most savage in themselves, and the most hostile to each other, shall live together in harmony; when the standard of the Saviour, through the zeal of the spiritual soldiery, shall be borne in triumph over every land, and our globe, which has for ages been the theatre of crime, and confusion, and blood, shall be consecrated a temple for his praise.

Reverend fathers and brethren, your imaginations have probably anticipated the most suitable application of this subject.

1. Is not gratitude, gratitude the most ardent and unfeigned due to the great God for this disclosure of his will in the oracles of truth, for lighting up this celestial lamp in our dark, benighted world? "Natural light is indeed sweet." How reviving to a mariner, tossed on the tempestuous ocean, without chart, or pilot; without a ray from either sun or star to illumine, would be a light

suddenly rising before and directing him to his desired haven! How cheering to the traveller, bewildered in some lonely desert, without any path to pursue, with no friendly guide to direct, remote from the abodes of men, and enveloped in the shadows of the night, would be a star unexpectedly appearing to his view, and shedding its light on the path to his wished for home! But to him who realizes the worth of the soul, or the magnitude of his eternal destinies, the *light* of divine truth must appear infinitely more precious. Say, my fellow mortals and immortals, how deplorable in the extreme, how desperate must have been your situation and mine this evening without the "glorious gospel of the blessed God?" Extinguish all the luminaries of heaven, and darkness less awful would cover the natural, than must have brooded on the moral world without this lamp of truth, this word of salvation. We should have indeed known our disease, but could have known of no healing balm, or tender physician to apply it: We should have felt the sting of remorse, the torturings of a guilty conscience, but we could have known nothing of that blood which speaks reconciliation and peace, of that crimson flood which rolls from the hill of Calvary and washes away the guilt of the nations: We must have entered into conflict with the king of terrors and felt his iron, unrelenting grasp, but should have been strangers to that Jesus who has "abolished

death," and will render all his followers "more than conquerors" in the arduous struggle: In looking down into the grave, to which we are rapidly tending, it must have appeared sullen, horrible as the gloom of midnight, but we should have heard no friendly voice whispering in our ears, "be not afraid to go down; I am he that liveth and was dead, and I revived and arose as a security, yea, as the very pattern of your resurrection: This grave is now numbered among my trophies as your victorious Captain, and from its dark dominions I will raise your bodies radiant as the sun in his meridian lustre." In looking still forward into eternity, it must have appeared at best a mighty void, awful, immeasurable, from whose bourn no traveller ever returned, but we could have discovered no "heavenly city, no new Jerusalem" with its *jasper* walls, with its golden streets, with its ivory palaces, with "the tree of life growing in the midst of it, yielding its fruits every month and healing the nations with its leaves:" all these discoveries so interesting to our present peace, so essential to our future welfare, it is reserved for the "gospel of the Son of God" to afford. *This, this bible is the record that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son.* It announces pardon for human guilt; healing for the desperate disease of sin, consolation amidst the varied sorrows of life, and the *jubilee* of

eternal emancipation to the most abject vassal of corruption and hell.

2. Is not gratitude, gratitude the most ardent and unfeigned, due to Jehovah, that this *light* has shone upon our own part of the world? During the lapse of many ages the sacred oracles were confined to a particular section of the earth, and the boon of "immortality and life" was offered to a particular family of men. The Lord God, in his searchless sovereignty, "gave his word exclusively to Jacob," and was revealed peculiarly as a God to Abraham and his offspring. Nay, my friends, is there not at this moment a great portion of our globe on which the true light has never shone? and are there not millions, hundreds of millions of immortal beings who have never seen a ray of its glory? and, in various countries which the scriptures have reached, are they not locked up in languages which the mass of the people are incapable of understanding, or, through the artifices of mercenary priests, wrested from their enjoyment? Contrasted with other ages and other countries, how exalted must our privileges appear? Among us, bibles are universally distributed, and every class of inhabitants not only permitted, but admonished to peruse them. They are, translated into the common language of our country, and, owing to the general establishment of schools and diffusion of learning, almost all are capable of reading and reflecting for them-

selves. There is another circumstance tending to evince the divine benignity to our favored land, which it would be ungrateful to pass over unnoticed, I mean the very inconsiderable expence at which the scriptures may be procured, and, by the institution of societies, they are gratuitously furnished for the poor. The lamp of sacred truth by this means diffuses its cheering light equally on the cottage of the mean, and the palace of the magnificent; and salvation through Jesus Christ is offered alike to the indigent and the affluent. It is related, in ecclesiastical history, that a poor widow in England gave a "cart load of hay for a leaf of the epistle of James;" and a Dutch Divine, soon after the reformation, mentions that in his age a copy of the scriptures, neatly transcribed, would cost nearly five hundred crowns: When we calculate the wages of a common laborer at that period, it appears that the earnings of a whole life would scarcely be sufficient to procure a copy of the bible, which in our country may be obtained by the earnings of a single day. The relation of these facts, I trust, will not be deemed impertinent on the present occasion, nor unworthy the attention of this very enlightened and respectable audience which I have the honor of addressing. May not these considerations inspire us with gratitude to that sovereign, munificent Being who has exalted us to such an eminence, not only over our brethren in other ages, but over millions in our

own age? Bugenhagenius, a German ecclesiastic, was so transported at the divine goodness in giving the scriptures to his nation in their own language that, when the translation was completed, he made an entertainment for his friends which he afterwards called "the feast of the translation of the bible." Ought we not therefore to keep a perpetual spiritual feast, a constant holy exultation, that the word of life is not only translated into our own language but circulated among all classes of our citizens? Contemplating our advantages in general, the universal diffusion of learning, the free distribution of the scriptures, and the liberty of inquiry which is secured by our civil constitution, may I not apply to our country the exclamation of a Jewish prophet over the land of Palestine? "how goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! as the vallies are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters?"

Amidst this profusion of the divine goodness to our world, and to our country, and to ourselves, are we not called to pursue with increasing ardor the great objects of our association, and to aim at diffusing more widely that gospel which brings "life and immortality to light?" I would not insult this dignified assembly by questioning their convictions of the importance of this work. Their convening in this sanctuary, this eve-

ning, is a pledge stronger than language can give of their solicitude for the heathen; and their promptitude to occupy any talent in the design of evangelizing them—Yet it may not be altogether unprofitable to reflect a few moments on the reasonableness of this enterprise: One may thus prove instrumental in throwing additional fuel on the flame of the zeal of the other. Go back with me, ye who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and long for the full fruition of his glory, go back with me and contemplate the condition of our forefathers previous to the dawn of the christian dispensation: They sat literally in darkness, and in “the region of the shadow of death:” No lamp of divine truth shone around to cheer the eye, or guide their feet in the paths of righteousness; no ambassador of Jesus appeared with the olive branch of peace in his hand, or with his soothing voice besought them to be reconciled to God. No, they were, in the most emphatic sense, *Gentiles, afar off, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, having no hope, and atheists in the world.* Thus forlorn was their situation, when apostles, inspired and inflamed by the Holy Ghost, looked upon their wretchedness, and hastened to their relief: Fired with zeal for their Master’s glory, and melting with compassion at the miseries of their fellow men, they seized their commission in their hand and went from country to country regardless alike of ease, of worldly interest, or honor; and how

glorious was the consequence? Through their preaching and the co-operation of almighty grace, the nations "which walked in darkness saw a great light;" they emerged from the gloom of pagan night into the splendors of spiritual and everlasting day.

Go back with me a few ages, and contemplate the condition of your forefathers and mine in Holland, in Scotland, in England, in Ireland and Germany: Were they not plunged in all the absurdities and abominations of papal superstition; deceived, and deceiving? If not degraded by the enormities of pagan idolatry, yet they were relying on their penances, and pilgrimages, and other antichristian observances which were equally unavailing for their salvation, and in their turn a Jerome, a Wickliff, a Luther, a Knox and a host of others looked upon their degradation and pitied while they beheld: They also seized the lamp of revelation, which had been buried for ages under the rubbish of superstition; they held it forth to the view of the nations, and the true light again gilded the general gloom. What is the history of apostles first, and of reformers afterwards, but a history of fatigue, of poverty, "of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds, of imprisonments," and even of death aggravated by every circumstance of horror? Can we deliberately contemplate their example and still remain indifferent? shall we arrogate the same office, and pretend to be actuated by the same spirit, and

yet sleep on "our beds of ivory" while the heathen are not converted, and the triumphs of the cross not extended? I ask you again, seeing we are "compassed by this cloud of witnesses," the apostles, and reformers and confessors of the Lamb, professing to have imbibed their spirit, to be walking in their footsteps, to be anticipating a share in their glory, can "we sleep on our beds of ivory" while the heathen are not converted, and the triumphs of the cross not extended? What! is not the soul of a poor, benighted, perishing pagan in the woods of America as precious? is not his destiny as awful? is he not equally susceptible of pain in the torments of hell, or of pleasure in the immunities of heaven, as the soul of an inhabitant of Greece, or Italy, or Holland, or Scotland, for whose salvation others made a sacrifice of their ease, and put in jeopardy their lives? Ah, brethren, these Elijahs have ascended without leaving scarcely the shadow of their mantle. How is my soul humbled when I read the *travels*, the *perils*, the *watchings*, the *fastings* of a Paul in the primitive church, of a Swartz the Moravian apostle, of an Elliot who labored among the Indians of this country and of the immortal Vanderkemp who lately breathed his last on the sands of Africa, and then contrast with their ardor my own indifference and sloth? They possessed an integrity in their sacred trust which no artifices of the world could allure; they manifested a heroism in their Master's cause which no

dangers could appal, and a patience in "well doing" which neither toil, nor hunger, nor heat nor cold could exhaust. Where is the Lord God of these champions in the christian warfare? Has the love of a bleeding Saviour lost its influence to constrain? Does the cross no longer possess its omnipotent efficacy for crucifying its disciples to the world, or the world to them?

Brethren, bear with an insignificant, self-condemned fellow-laborer while he dwells on the miseries of the American heathen, and expostulates with you to provide the means of relieving them. It is not a stain on their reputation which I ask you to wipe off; it is not a moth in their property which I entreat you to "crush;" it is not a wound in the flesh which I solicit you to bind up, but it is a canker, a morbid, mortal canker, corroding the very vitals of the soul, to which I adjure you to administer the healing balm. I do declare, in the presence of angels and of God, that, I think, we have been unfaithful to our consciences, unfaithful to our Master, unfaithful to the eternal interests of these our brethren who are probably perishing without hope; I may add, we have been unfriendly to our own future glorying by the languor of our missionary efforts. I say, to all the reproach which we have incurred, and to all the guilt contracted, we have acted a part hostile to our own future glorying. How many pagans in the north, and the west, and the south of this continent

might we already have had as our "crown and joy" by a nobler zeal, and more disinterested exertions?

Let us, therefore, receive the word of exhortation, and awake from that lethargy which is below the dignity of the man or the minister who professes to have imbibed the same spirit by which holy men and ministers in former ages were actuated. No longer satisfied with giving the word of life to the destitute at home, or supporting missionaries among the savages who reside on our borders, let us look farther into the western wilderness; let us inquire into the language of what Indian tribe the scriptures may most profitably be translated, and by our contributions this evening furnish the means of executing the benevolent plan: Let us explore without delay some new missionary field, and look around for some other Swartzs, or Elliots, or Vanderkemps, some precious youth of heroic spirits, of liberal learning, of ready utterance, and full of the Holy Ghost, who will go forth as pioneers to "prepare the way of the Lord:" Let those who remain behind follow them with their prayers night and day, and of their substance amply minister to their support. Can you look upon that hoary-headed savage; can you see him tottering under a weight of years, and pressed down by a heavier load of guilt? ready to sink into the grave, ready to sink into the arms of the second death, can you look on such a spec-

tacle without heaving a sigh, without dropping a tear, without passionately exclaiming, Lord, save him or he must perish, without reaching forth your offering to send him a copy of the scriptures, or a messenger of peace to teach him the way of salvation? When I estimate the worth of a human soul; when I realize the endlessness of its duration in a future state, and the immensity of its capacities either for pleasure or pain: When I go forward in imagination to a distant point in eternity and behold this soul still living, these capacities still unfolding and acquiring new vigor, and then reflect that these powers, thus enlarged and enlarging, will be eternally occupied either in honoring my God or blaspheming his holy name, I am really lost in the contemplation: any language which I can employ falls almost infinitely short of the description. But why do I speak of one soul? are there not thousands, yea, probably millions in the vast forests of America? I appeal then to all that is tender in the conscience, to all that is enlightened or expanded in the understanding, to all that is humane or generous in the heart of every worshipper within these walls; can you allow yourselves in any luxury of living, in any superfluity of dress, in any splendor of equipage, while there remains an Indian tribe without the scriptures translated into their language, or a missionary preacher residing in their borders?

Brethren, dearly beloved in the Lord, although the aspect of divine providence towards the church and the world has for years been deeply interesting and awful, yet I look through the clouds which have thickened around, and hail the dawn of a more auspicious morning. Promises of scripture without number assure us that "the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all nations," and successive events in providence apparently presage the speedy accomplishment of these promises. It is a very interesting fact in the dispensations of Jehovah, that, when any signal interposition for his church is shortly to take place, an expectation of it is excited, and a spirit of prayer for it is poured forth. By this arrangement while he is fulfilling his own predeterminations he is gratifying the wishes, and answering the prayers of his people.— Previous to the incarnation of the Son of God and his appearance on earth, the expectation of some illustrious personage was universally entertained; entertained even by the heathen around the place where he should appear. Was not the *golden age* which he should introduce the subject of song to their bards, and of declamation to their orators? Was it not predicted occasionally by their oracles, and painted and panegyricized by their poets? More especially among the offspring of Abraham, the peculiar people of God, did not the faith of the appearing of Messiah universally pre-

vail; and in all their approaches to the mercy seat was it not a part of their petition, "O, that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion: That the *Star* which our fathers beheld with prophetic eye might actually appear to enlighten and gladden the nations? And to the most superficial observer is there not a remarkable coincidence between the situation of the world previous to the coming of our Lord in the flesh, and its present situation when we look for *him* in the wider spread of his gospel and the brighter displays of his glory? Has there not been lately a general "shaking of the nations?" thrones tottering to their centre; revolution succeeding revolution as wave in the ocean succeeds wave, ancient establishments civil and ecclesiastical sinking from their towering heights and crumbling into atoms? Has not the very earth which we inhabit appeared to sympathize and shake with the shaking of the nations which dwell upon it? Perhaps in the natural history of our globe there has rarely been an instance of such a variety of phenomena, following each other in rapid succession, as we have witnessed within the lapse of a few years; the preternatural descent of water in some places; its uncommon, and unaccountable rise in other places, the earthquakes* which again and

* This part of the discourse was delivered in September 1813, and the alarm excited by successive earthquakes, during a preceding winter and Spring, must be fresh in the recollection of almost every reader. They were felt occasionally from Maryland to the southern part of North America, and from the At-

again have shaken considerable sections of our continent. Our lot is seemingly cast in that period foreseen and foretold by an ancient prophet, "I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and I will shake all nations." And amidst these fearful concussions of the earth, and its inhabitants, is there not an ardent, almost universal longing for the spiritual advent of Him who is *the desire of all nations*? Was there, since the ascension of our Lord, such a general impression among christians that "the fulness of the Gentiles is speedily to be gathered in," and such a cordial concurrence and co-operation for promoting this glorious work? The hand of almost every true Israelite is reached forth to accelerate the motion of the *spiritual ark* in its progress through regions hitherto unexplored. Thousands who reside in different countries, who were nurtured in different prejudices, who appertain to different communions are uniting hand with hand, blending heart with heart, and mingling their deliberations in the important design; and their prayers are daily ascending in one stream for the descent of the Holy Ghost *upon all flesh*. More tracts, containing the truth as it is in Jesus, have been published and distributed; more missionaries have been sent forth to differ-

lantic to the region west of the Mississippi: and the effect produced by them appears in the following remark of a merchant in Tennessee. "Before the earthquakes I sold ten packs of cards where I sold one bible, and now I sell ten bibles for one pack of cards."

ent and distant nations ; more bibles have been translated into foreign languages and circulated in foreign countries within the last twenty* years than perhaps during the ten centuries which preceded ; and how liberal are the offerings which are almost every where made for the service of the temple of our God ! No sooner is a new plan projected for the extension of his kingdom than the gold and the silver, the abundance of the rich and the mite of the poor roll spontaneously into his treasury for the execution : And the same spirit which formerly

* This representation will not appear exaggerated when we advert to the following facts. A single society in England, according to a statement given by Porteus, late Bishop of London, in a sermon preached in 1802, had circulated between two and three millions of tracts ; and the number distributed by that or another similar society, as appeared in a late periodical publication, amounted to more than twenty two millions. About 20 years have elapsed since the missionary spirit so eminently rested on the churches in England, and about half that period since the first bible society was formed ; and during that period missionaries have been supported, and the translation and distribution of the living oracles promoted with a liberality altogether unparalleled in the history of the religious world. The parent bible society in London "has printed or contributed to the printing of the word of God in fifty-five different languages and dialects : " There are already in Great Britain, of less or larger grade, 400 bible societies and branches : In the United States there are 66 : In the Russian empire 8 have been lately established in their principal cities, and patronised by the most distinguished characters, literary and political, throughout the nation. "These have undertaken to translate and print the scriptures in ten different languages and dialects, which are used in the Russian dominions." Similar societies have recently been instituted in Holland, in Denmark, in Switzerland, in Germany, and almost every country on the European continent. Thus the ancient prophesy is receiving its literal accomplishment, "they shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." By the mission of the messengers of peace into the various quarters of the world ; by the translation of the scriptures into all languages, and their diffusion among all nations, the seed is now deposited which, in the Lord's time, will no doubt spring up, and present the millennial harvest.

rested upon the Jew leading him to pray "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion, is now exciting the Gentile believer to expostulate, "let thy way be known upon earth and thy saving health among all nations: Let all the earth fear him, let them show forth the praises of Jehovah." Such are the signs of the times that the gospel is speedily to "bring life and immortality to light" through every region under heaven.

It may be that the *vials of wrath*, which have been poured upon the "seat of the beast and the false prophet," are not exhausted, and that "the smoke of their torment has yet to ascend" in columns more awful in the "sight of God and the Lamb:" It may be that the "flesh of kings, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh" of mercenary priests, and the flesh of iron-hearted inquisitors, whose hands have been stained with the blood of the saints, are yet to be offered as a banquet to the *fowls of heaven* for a display of severer vengeance against the impurities and impieties of the *papal harlot*. It may be that the storm which has blackened over protestant lands will burst with a fury more terrible blowing "the chaff from the wheat;" and that the faith of the christian is perhaps to be tried in the fires of persecution: It may be that we shall not live to hear that shout of exultation thundering through the temple on earth and the temple in heaven, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen and shall arise no

more ;” It may be that we shall not live to see the “partition wall” which separates christian from christian “parted in twain from the top to the bottom,” and *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism visibly professed over the whole earth : It may be that we shall not live to see these great events, yet I no more doubt but they will occur, each in its proper order, than I this moment doubt my own existence : It may be that this generation will pass away before all these things be accomplished, yet, christian, be not anxious. The intelligence will soon reach thee in thy Father’s kingdom. Legions of angels are ready to communicate the tidings through every part of the divine dominions : But I verily believe that, although we may not live to see them, our immediate offspring will see them. Yes, the *solitary places* will soon be made glad through the diffusion of *the tidings of great joy, and the desert will blossom as the rose* : Oh, how reviving is even the anticipation ! How transporting beyond conception must be the sublime reality ! when the *wilderness* in all directions, far as the eye can range, shall be converted into a second *paradise* ; when it shall appear “fair as Eden, and fruitful as the garden of the Lord ;” when all the trees of the forest shall become “trees of righteousness,” the planting of Jehovah, each presenting its blossoms and fruits in due season ; when, as a New Testament prophet has described it, “the tabernacle of God shall be with men ;—

and they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it."

It is readily acknowledged that obstacles great, and, to the eye of sense, insurmountable, lie in the way of the progress of that gospel which "brings life and immortality to light." The savage is yet roving in his habits; the sceptic is yet sullenly sneering and scoffing and blaspheming; the Jew remains bigoted, and obstinate, and apparently invincible; the disciple of Mahomet is yet taking his pilgrimages to Mecca, and offering his deluded homage at the tomb of his prophet; nations numerous "as the stars of heaven" are sunk in ignorance and sottishness nearly to a level with the beast of the field, and by crimes which we should blush to mention are degraded far below them; but what is either or all these obstacles before the Lord God of gods? He touches the loftiest mountain and it sinks, and the lowest valley and it rises, and the path becomes plain for the messenger of the cross through every clime: He has only to *breathe upon the bones* which are now scattered over the face of the earth, and however dry, or motionless, or lifeless they instantly revive and stand upon their feet: All the wars which divide and distract the nations; all the collusions of worldly policy, and the conflict* of worldly passions are no more in the way of the accomplishment

* None who witnessed the scenes lately exhibited on the great theatre of Europe and the world, can reasonably doubt the accomplishment of any prediction or promise: A cloud had collected, and spread, and darkened the whole horizon: The tem-

of his promises, than the feather is in the way of the infuriated torrent, or the little atom is in the way of the sun as he rolls majestic in his orbit, or the arm of a mortal is in the way of the red lightnings of heaven: and as every obstacle which might retard the execution of his designs recedes at his command, instruments will not be wanting when "the fulness of his time has arrived, and the decree begins to travail for bringing forth." He who can create a world at a word; who at his pleasure calls for other suns and systems *will not, cannot be* impeded a single moment from performing any plan which his wisdom devises, or his will determines: If those who have the gift of utterance refuse, from motives either of carnal ease, or interest, to go forth as apostles to the heathen, at the call of his providence, the hearts of c-

pest had for many years been *beating* upon the nations in a manner unusually awful and wasteful, threatening to sweep in its career all that is interesting to us as men and christians: But how suddenly has this cloud vanished? The storm is changed into a calm; the tumult of battle has almost instantaneously subsided: *The garments of the warrior are no longer rolled in blood; The sword of the destroying angel, which had long been stretched over our apparently devoted world, is now slumbering in its scabbard:* At this time last year there was scarcely a nation at peace, now there is scarcely a nation at war: And all this mighty change has been produced *unexpectedly*, and in a manner utterly beyond the reach of human calculation. It cannot be ascribed to any plans of the statesman, or prowess of the warrior, or the controlling influence of one country over all other countries; but it must be considered as *coming forth from the Lord of hosts: He sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever: He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.* Contemplating these great events we are constrained to exclaim, *with God nothing is impossible:* We are encouraged to wait in confident expectation for the fulfilment of every prophesy and promise of his word.

thers shall be touched with seraphic ardor, and the tongues of others touched with seraphic eloquence to tell the stranger and the foreigner the exceeding riches of divine grace; to proclaim to the inhabitants of every clime that Jesus is "appointed for salvation to the ends of the earth:" If those to whom, as stewards, a sovereign God has entrusted his *hidden treasures refuse* to give, or give *sparingly*, or give *grudgingly* at his command, the wealth of others shall roll in abundance for the support of his servants, and the distribution of his living word: Cherish, ye who long and pray for the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom, cherish the transporting thought that the fountain, at which a Paul, a Luther, an Elliot and a Swartz so freely drank, is not exhausted, nay, it is not diminished by all the influences which they received from it; and he who constrained "the wise men of the East to lay their gold, and frankincense, and myrrh as an offering" at the feet of the new born Saviour, still has dominion over the hearts of the rich of this world, and will oblige them at his pleasure to consecrate their wealth for his glory.

Come then, ye children of the kingdom, let us ask a coal from the same altar at which others have been enflamed, and let us go forth "for the help of Jehovah" in carrying on the most interesting of his works, the scheme of reconciling our world through the sacrifice of his own Son; that scheme which occupied the councils of peace from eterni-

ty ; for which his Holy One, his Fellow, the Man of his right hand groaned, and bled, and expired on the accursed tree ; that scheme for the progress of which every inhabitant of heaven is waiting this moment with silent, yet ardent solicitude : Lift up your heads and rejoice for, yet a little while, the night of vengeance will pass over, and the morning of a milder and brighter day dawn upon the world. "Having overturned, and overturned, and overturned, He will come whose right it is : " Yes, Jesus our Beloved and Prince will come ; the light of his gospel shall beam effulgent over every land, and the unction of his Spirit shall descend fragrant upon all nations. *Alleluiah* shall resound through every part of the church militant ; *Alleluiah* shall burst responsive from ten thousand, thousand, thousand tongues in the church triumphant, *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

In the faith of these sublime and interesting realities, let us unite in offering willingly for the service of our God. By our contributions this evening let it appear to our Saviour that we still recollect the scenes of Gethsemane, and Calvary, and are constrained to love him : Let it appear to any minister who is now attending from the upper sanctuary that like him we not only *rejoice at the repentance of a sinner*, but are willing to spend in promoting it. Let the savage of the western woods, who

is now lying in his hut, hungry, naked, cold, disconsolate, miserable in this world, and in danger of being damned in the next, let him recollect with joy through eternity the result of this evening when the means were provided for conveying the "light of immortality and life" into his cheerless abode: But why do I speak merely of promoting the joy of the destitute savage? an opportunity is now afforded you for promoting your own interest and glory: By your contributions this evening you may soften the agony of every affliction which awaits you in life; you may enhance the consolations of a dying hour; you may shed an additional radiance over the *dark valley* through which you have shortly to pass; you may secure a more elevated station and a more abundant reward in that hour when the judge from the throne will dispense to every male and female according to their works; you may add to the extent of that inheritance a title to which is already in your possession "as heirs of salvation;" you may secure a brighter crown and a more magnificent mansion in the everlasting kingdom: For as you now communicate, in motive and in measure, it will be communicated to you of glory and bliss in death, at judgment, and for ever.