

THE
BETHEL FLAG:

A

SERIES OF SHORT DISCOURSES TO SEAMEN.

BY
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CONTENTS.

	Page.
PRAYERS FOR THE RELIGIOUS SERVICES OF THE LORD'S	
DAY, AT SEA - - - - -	7

SERMON I.

THE SABBATH AT SEA.

Psalm xxvi. 8. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth - - -	14
--	----

SERMON II.

GOD ALMIGHTY.

Genesis xvii. 1. I am the Almighty God - - -	24
--	----

SERMON III.

THE SINNER'S FRIEND.

Matthew ix 19. A friend to sinners - - -	34
---	----

SERMON IV.

UNBELIEVERS WITHOUT HOPE.

Ephesians ii. 12. Having no hope - - -	46
--	----

SERMON V.

THE CURSE OF ABANDONMENT RELUCTANTLY EXECUTED.

Hosea ii 8. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim? - - -	55
---	----

SERMON VI.

SIN DETECTED AND EXPOSED.

Numbers xxxii. 23. And be sure your sin will find you out -	65
---	----

20281

SERMON VII.

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE.

- Mark xvi. 16. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;
but he that believeth not shall be damned - - - 76

SERMON VIII.

FEAR RELIEVED BY TRUST IN GOD.

- Psalms lxvi. 3. At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee - 85

SERMON IX.

THE TERMS OF DISCIPLESHIP.

- Matthew xvi. 24. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man
will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross,
and follow me - - - 97

SERMON X.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

- John iii. 14, 15. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,
even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever be-
lieveth in him should not perish, but have eternal life - - 106

SERMON XI.

ALL IS WELL.

- Mark vii. 37. He hath done all things well - - - 118

SERMON XII.

REMEMBRANCE OF SIN.

- Ezekiel xvi. 63. That thou mayest remember, and be confounded,
and never again open thy mouth any more because of thy shame,
when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done - 129

SERMON XIII.

RUNNING FOR THE PRIZE.

- 1 Corinthians ix. 24. So run that ye may obtain - - - 140

SERMON XIV.

AGGRAVATIONS OF SIN.

- Luke xii. 49. And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and
prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be
beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did com-
mit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes - 150

CONTENTS.

Page.

SERMON XV.

CONSCIOUS INTEGRITY A PRESERVATIVE FROM EVIL.

Psalm xxv. 21. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me. - 166

SERMON XVI.

DEATH ON BOARD THE SHIP.

Isaiah xl. 6. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field - - - - - 175

SERMON XVII.

RESTRAINING PRAYER.

Job xv. 4. And restrainest prayer before God - - - - 182

SERMON XVIII.

THE FEAR OF GOD THE GREAT PRESERVATIVE FROM SIN.

Nehemiah v. 15. But so did not I, because of the fear of God - 193

SERMON XIX.

THE WANDERER RESTORED.

Psalm xxiii. 3. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake - - - - 201

SERMON XX.

GOD'S CALL REFUSED.

Proverbs i. 24—31. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: then shall ye call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof: therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them - - - - - 212

SERMON XXI.

THE NIGHT OF TEARS, AND THE MORNING OF JOY.

Psalm xxx. 5. Weeping may endure for a night; but joy cometh
in the morning - - - - - 238

SERMON XXII.

ROOM ENOUGH YET.

Luke xiv. 22. And yet there is room - - - - - 239

SERMON XXIII.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN PROLONGING HUMAN LIFE.

Psalm xci. 16. With long life will I satisfy him - - - - - 246

SERMON XXIV.

TRUE AND FALSE REPENTANCE.

Psalm li. 3. For I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is
ever before me. And

Matthew xxvii. 3. Then Judas which had betrayed him, when he
saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again
the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying,
I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood - - 260

SERMON XXV.

THE EXCUSES OF MEN THEIR CONDEMNATION.

Luke xiv. 18. And they all, with one consent, began to make
excuse - - - - - 278

SERMON XXVI.

SCRIPTURAL VIEWS OF CHRIST.

Matthew xxii. 12. What think ye of Christ? - - - - - 292

THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD - - - - - 307

THE BETHEL FLAG.

PRAYERS

FOR THE

RELIGIOUS SERVICES OF THE LORD'S DAY, AT SEA.

A Short Introductory Prayer at the beginning of the Service, and immediately before Reading the Scriptures.

O LORD God, the Creator, the Preserver, and the Redeemer of men! we thine unworthy servants, separated in thy providence from the privileges of thy Sanctuary, are here met to worship before thy great and holy throne. We thank thee for this opportunity; and that the throne at which we bow is a throne of grace. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we approach thee; and since he has said, "Wherever two, or three, are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," do thou grant us thy presence in these services, that we may worship thee with reverence and godly fear, to our own profit and thy glory. Amen!

[Here let a portion of the Scriptures be read.]

[Then let there be offered the following General Prayer.]

LORD, thou art God, that hast made the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. From everlasting

to everlasting, thou art God alone. Thy greatness knows no bounds, thy perfections are infinite, thy existence has no beginning, and will have no end. O Lord, we have heard thy speech, and were afraid. He stood and measured the earth; he beheld and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. The mountains saw thee, and they trembled; the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep utters his voice, and lifts up his hands on high. We cannot flee from thy Spirit, nor escape from thy presence; for thou fillest heaven and earth, and the whole universe subsists in thee as in a boundless ocean.

Thou art holy in thyself, thy name is holy, thy law is holy, thy day is holy, and thou art holy in all thy works. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. And so is the great and wide sea. Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee; the foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all the workers of iniquity. Thou art good, and the source of all good to creatures. The earth is full of thy goodness and bounty. What goodness, what bounty, to be thus bestowed upon man who is a worm, and the son of man who is a worm! Thou art gracious, and long-suffering, and slow to anger, and of great kindness. The mercy of the Lord endureth forever. We ourselves are witnesses of all these things. We are living, O make us the grateful observers of this thy greatness and goodness, and grant that we may so live as to show forth thy praise. Thanks, great God, and praise be to thee from all thy creatures, that thou hast thus made known thy great and worthy name!

O God, we humbly bow down before thee ; we worship thee as the God in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways. We are dependent upon thee ; we are thy creatures, thy servants, thy property. All we have and are, are thy gifts ; O make us thine affectionate and dutiful children—the children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ. For we are sinners before thee, O Lord, and are fallen by our iniquity. We are prone to evil as the sparks fly upward ; we have been tempted to evil, and we have yielded to the temptation ; in thought, word, and deed, we have committed iniquity ; we have sinned against heaven and before thee, and are no more worthy to be called thy children.

Yet is thy mercy great unto the heavens, and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Who, O Lord, is a strong Lord like unto thee, and to thy faithfulness round about thee ! Thy Son has descended for our salvation ; God himself has become man ; infinite power has put on human weakness ; infinite holiness has assumed human guilt ; infinite blessedness has taken upon him our woes ; he who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might become rich. For thy name's sake, O Lord, and for the love and sufferings of thy Son, pardon our iniquity, for it is great. Sanctify us by thy Holy Spirit ; restrain and keep us from evil, by thy good providence ; guard us from the abominable thing which thy soul hateth ; keep us from falling, and preserve us to thy heavenly kingdom.

It is in the multitude of thy tender mercies, O God, that we this day worship thee. What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us ? We thank thee especially that thou hast kept us in safety thus

far, while we have been upon the mighty waters. We are prospered, only as God prospers us; we are safe, only as God keeps us. O thou who carriest the waters in the hollow of thy hand, make us all still the objects of thy care. Guard us from death, accident, and sickness. From enemies, and tempest, and adverse providences, and contrary winds protect us. Preserve the ship that bears us on our way; bless her owners, her officers, and her crew, and make her way and her end prosperous. Restore us all to our much loved land in safety and mercy, and gratefully impressed with thy goodness. Spread the shield of thy guardianship and love over those we have left behind us; and let not calamity or death in any form invade them, or come up into their chambers. Look in mercy upon all who sail on the ocean, and grant that the perils to which they are exposed may be avoided, the blessings they need may be vouchsafed to them, the fear of God be before their eyes, and the multitude who dwell on the ocean may be turned unto thee.

Grant, O God, that we thy servants may live mindful of our last end. May we listen to the voice of thy providence, and thy word, which teaches us that man's days are as an hand's breath; and when this boisterous and short voyage of human life is over, O receive us into thy heavenly kingdom, and thine own everlasting rest. All we ask is in the name of Christ, thy Son, who is worthy, with the Father and the Spirit, to receive everlasting praises. Amen.

Here read a Sermon and then conclude with the following Prayer.

O THOU that art the God of all the earth, and of them

that are afar off upon the sea. We once more come to thy mercy seat to bless thee for the privileges we have enjoyed on this holy day ; to implore thy blessing ; and to beg thee to give testimony to the word of thy grace. O God, who art so high above all thy creatures, that they are but as worms before thee, thou hast done great things for us, for which we render praise to thy great name. Not only dost thou care for us, and keep us in safety here upon the mighty deep, and open thy hand every day to supply our wants ; but thou dost not cease to watch over our souls. Thou hast given thy Son to die for us ; thou hast once more knocked at the door of our hearts ; and thou hast condescended to impart solemn thoughts to our minds, so that we are left without excuse. O that thou wouldst make us faithful to follow the instructions of thy holy word, and wise unto salvation ! We have lived more for earth, than for heaven ; for the world, than for eternity ; for ourselves, than for thee. Do not suffer us, we beseech thee, to be so occupied by the cares, and labors of this present life, as to lose sight of that eternal life which is beyond the grave. But rather may we live every day, so that if the Son of Man should say to us, This night thy soul shall be required of thee ; we may be prepared to stand before him.

We confess and mourn the sins that separate us from thee. Henceforth may we be kept from sinning against thee. Grant us thy grace. Teach us to choose thee as our portion and refuge ; to hope in none but thee ; to live for none but thee. Thou art the Good Shepherd, from whom we have erred and strayed like lost sheep, but who dost gather the wanderers with thine arm and lead them into the fold. Have us still in thy

holy keeping ; this day, this night, this week preserve us. Keep us from all danger, and guard us by thy watchful providence. Teach us to be content with the allotment which thou hast assigned to us. Give us strength and courage for all our duty and our dangers, and bless the work of our hands. May we never forget that we are always under thine eye, and may the thought of thy presence lead us to every good word and work. May we study to be useful to one another, and so promote one another's best good. May good order, peace and harmony pervade our crew. O God, pardon us, and sanctify us, and save us through Jesus Christ, in whom alone we would place our confidence.

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name ! Thy kingdom come ; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven ! Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil : for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever !"

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen !

SERMON I.

THE SABBATH AT SEA.

PSALM XXVI. 8. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth.

THERE is a moral sublimity in a Sabbath at sea. The landsman conjectures it, paints it; while the devout seaman *feels* it; there are aspirations here felt, felt nowhere else.

Yet what is it that gives such sublimity to a Sabbath at sea? It is not the mart of business which we here enter. Nor are they the portals of science and literature. Nor is it the splendid and lofty cathedral;—no, nor yet the more simple and humble sanctuary, where far-distant friends “worship, and bow down, and kneel before the Lord, their Maker.”

“Great objects consecrate all that is around them.” This vast ocean, this emblem of infinity, itself gives sublimity to the scene. Infinite greatness and infinite littleness here meet. God, the Eternal, here condescends and bows to meet man, his creature, just as the vast heavens bow and meet the waters in the distant horizon. Great and solemn associations are sublime, and ought to inspire great and solemn thoughts.

We worship him who is the God of all the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea. How shall we worship him? “God is a Spirit, and they that worship

him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." May creatures of yesterday, and sinners as we are, hope to worship him acceptably?

It is no splendid and no costly sacrifice that he requires of us. "He giveth grace to the humble." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." No matter where, nor by whom, such worship is offered; no matter with what grateful, cheered, and gladsome thoughts it may be inmingled; through that great atoning, interceding Saviour, it goes up perfumed with incense, before the throne of God. The High and Lofly One who inhabiteth eternity, deigns to look upon us. He who loveth the gates of Zion, does not turn away from the tents of Jacob; and though it be on the placid, or billowy ocean, "where two, or three, are met together in his name, there is he in the midst of them."

"Far from home, and far from land," as we are, which of our bosoms does not respond to the sentiment of the devout Psalmist, when he says, "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth!"

Save the "works of necessity and mercy," the Sabbath at sea, like the Sabbath on shore, is, by divine appointment, a day of *rest*. The Great Lord of heaven and earth, of land and ocean, has given to the inhabitants of the globe on which we dwell, one day's respite out of seven from the ordinary occupations of human life. The Sabbath was benevolently designed to bring this stated relief from anxiety and toil. To a seaman, whose body and mind are in such a state of perpetual excitement—to this little laborious, working community—such a rest is like the soft slumbers of midnight when,

in defiance of the noisy tempest, it covers with its gentle folds an agitated and trembling mind, and a body overpowered with toil. The Sabbath is the seaman's friend. Who can doubt, that one motive which influenced its Author to institute it, was compassion to the weary and weather-beaten mariner? Never does the bright sun dawn more beautifully, than when he sheds his rays upon a Sabbath at sea.

No, it is not in the sanctuary of our fathers that we meet to-day; but it is to worship our fathers' God. When the Patriarch Jacob was fleeing from the face of Esau, and was on his way to Padan-aram, he tarried all night at a place where the God of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, condescended to commune with him as his creature and child. And he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the *house of God*, and the gate of heaven." He that was with Jacob in the desert is with us on the sea. Verily, "it is good to be here." It is good to see his power and glory as they overlay this world of waters, to hear his voice as it whispers in the gentle wind, or speaks from the dashing billows. It is good to mark his presence, as "the overflowing of the water passes by, and the deep utters his voice, and lifts up his hands on high."

Heathen deities are honored in their places of worship. Near their temples are the groves sacred to their foul idolatries, and consecrated to their images of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood. This idol worship extended itself to the great sanctuary of the sea, and seamen worshipped gods which their own hands had made. We are not Pagans, but Christians, and worship

the only living and true God. Why should not *we* pay our homage to *Him*, as well as *they* their insensible homage to their more insensate idols? It is a privilege in which he has made us to differ from them, that we know him, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent; and well may we feel it a privilege to express our adoring and grateful thoughts of him, acknowledge his claims, make confession of our sins, implore his mercy, and utter the memory and the praise of his great goodness. It were truly a beautiful sight to see a ship's company thus devoutly honoring the God of heaven. It is an affecting thought to think of, and dwell upon,—that the Great God, before whom angels bow and devils tremble; the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, condescends to accept this homage from creatures who have so offended him, and who flock here around his footstool! There is a holy and heavenly delight in such a privilege as this. There are new and happy emotions within us in the enjoyment of such seasons, and there are outflowings of those emotions towards God and man.

The moral and spiritual influence of the Sabbath at sea is such, that every thoughtful mind will value it. It assembles those who are remote from better opportunities, to listen to the instructions of God's word; instructions that are alike suited to the wise and the unwise, to the prince and the sailor-boy. Many a ship that sails the ocean has been the chosen theatre of marvellous displays of his grace. The hearts of seamen are in his hands, as well as the hearts of landmen. It is written in his word, that "the multitudes of the sea shall be converted unto him." Here, as well as elsewhere, he makes men wise to salvation. He opens the eyes of the blind, and makes them see; he opens the

ears of the deaf, and makes them hear; he awakens the fears of the stupid, and makes them afraid; he softens the hearts of the stubborn and obdurate, and makes them feel. Many a Sabbath at sea has carried light and conviction to the consciences of the bold and stout-hearted, thrown them into the gall of bitterness, and made them feel the bonds of their iniquity. And here, he who thus wounds, also heals; he who kills, also makes alive. The Reprover becomes the Comforter; those who are thus cast down are led by him to trust in his grace. We have strong hopes of the conversion and salvation of seamen. The vilest among them is not so corrupt and degenerate, as to be beyond the hope of repentance and recovery. "Whosoever will, may take of the waters of life freely."

To those whom we have left behind us, the house of God is a refuge in the time of trouble. It is a sacred asylum; a place of protection; a shelter from the storm and a covert from the tempest. Seamen are sufferers as well as other men. They are used to suffering; and though it be uncomplaining suffering before men, many a tear trickles down the cheek of the hardy mariner when he is alone, and no eye sees him but God's. A Sabbath at sea is a delightful relief to the sailor, who is the child of misfortune and of sorrow. Trouble sometimes rushes in upon him like mighty waters; it drives him from his much-loved home, and his native shores, to seek a refuge amid the solitude of the wide ocean. He may have been the thoughtless and guilty cause of his own sufferings. And how well timed the relief, to find amid the quietude and subduing privileges of a Sabbath at sea, a little Bethel, where, with one of old he may say, "Why art thou cast down,

O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God!"

The seaman often has a heavy and a broken heart, because lover and friend are put from him, and his acquaintance into darkness. He may be friendless and poor; or sickness may debilitate, and pain agonize him, and he may look towards the dark ocean as his grave. How sweet and soothing are the influences of this day of heavenly peace and mercy to such a man! and how, when such, or other adverse providences overshadow him, is he counselled to bear in mind that "These light afflictions are but for a moment," and that if rightly and religiously improved, they "work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" It is well, when we suffer, that we should feel that the hand of God is upon us, and that he is angry with us for our sins; but it is also well that we should feel that he is a "refuge for us, and a very present help in trouble." And this is one of the chief lessons of the Sabbath, whether at sea, or on shore. It is a sign of peace, an emblem of God's mercy to the suffering and lost, a standing sign and proof, returning once in every seven days, of the finished work of that Great Redeemer, who is the helper of the helpless, and who says, with such unutterable tenderness, "Come unto me, all ye who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The cup of adversity goes round, and no class of men are exempt from tasting it. Some drink deeper of it than others; days of sighing and grief, and wearisome nights are appointed to them. And when God thus smites us, it is vain to boast that we care not for it. There is no reason, no religion, no courage in this. But there

is courage, there is religion, there is reason, in looking to God, in trusting in God when he smites us. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" We cannot hope too much from God. At what time I am "afraid, I will trust in thee!" O what a sweet and holy serenity often comes over the mind, as it is agitated with apprehension, and as it looks out on the blackened skies, and knows not how soon the storm will burst, or where the bolt will fall! The Sabbath at sea invites us to this repose. "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth and for evermore."

There is still another claim which the Sabbath has upon seamen. They, like other men, are bound to live to some good purpose in the world. "None of us," saith the apostle, "liveth to himself." Wherever they go, whatever seas they traverse, whatever islands they touch at, and to whatever ports they are bound in Heathen, Mahomedan, or Christian lands, it should be their great object so to conduct themselves, that their influence shall be for good, and not for evil. Alas! how much evil have seamen done in our world! "The harp, and the viol, the tabret and the pipe, and the wine have been in their feasts," and they have "regarded not the works of the Lord, nor considered the operations of his hands." That great and dreadful name, **THE LORD THEIR God**, they have treated with impious irreverence; and with solemn oaths and blasphemy, they "have set their

O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me ?
Hope thou in God ; for I shall yet praise him who is
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There is still another claim which the Sabbath has upon seamen. They, like other men, are bound to live to some good purpose in the world. "None of us," saith the apostle, "liveth to himself." Wherever they go, whatever seas they traverse, whatever islands they touch at, and to whatever ports they are bound in Heathen, Mahomedan, or Christian lands, it should be their great object so to conduct themselves, that their influence shall be for good, and not for evil. Alas! how much evil have seamen done in our world! "The harp, and the viol, the tabret and the pipe, and the wine have been in their feasts," and they have "regarded not the works of the Lord, nor considered the operations of his hands." That great and dreadful name, **THE LORD THEIR GOD**, they have treated with impious irreverence; and with solemn oaths and blasphemy, they "have set their

mouth against the heavens, and their tongue has walked through the earth." Not a few of them have been examples of filial impiety and social insubordination; and had they been unrestrained, would have left no law unreversed, and no scene of confusion unrealized. Unreasonable anger, and furious and revengeful passions, have often led them to deeds of violence which have made them the dread of their fellow-men. Even now, after all the reform among seamen, if a ship-master is looking for men, he is sure to find them in the haunts of licentiousness. Plunder and depredation also, too often mark the course of the mariner at sea, and in foreign lands; while "their mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a hand of falsehood." Now, this is a dreadful influence to sail over and send round this degenerate world. Charity weeps over it, religion and civilization weep over it. And it must be changed, ere seamen live to the great purposes of their accountable and immortal existence. They little think how much they live for the weal, or woe of their fellow-men, and to what extent they hold in their hands the destiny of thousands. Every ship should bear a healthful moral influence to every land, and every seaman should be a light shining in a dark place. And what is so fitted to create and preserve such an influence as the Sabbath at sea? But for the narrow and short-sighted, as well as wicked policy of ship-owners and ship-masters, which has so profaned this day as to make it a day of needless, and sometimes augmented labor; and where not of labor, a day of mirth and glee; seamen might have been among the moral and more useful class of men. There is no speech nor language where their influence would not have been welcome, and

where it would not have been felt and gratefully acknowledged. Nothing but the Sabbath, the Sabbath at sea, can make seamen the ornament and honor of their race. Nothing else can save them from being corrupt, and the corrupters of their fellow-men, and make them blessings and blessed. Not until the Sabbath brings them under the control of new principles and a new power, will they become the living exemplifications of God's truth and love, the guardians of his holiness and the friends of their race.

“Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, the place where thine honor dwelleth.” Let us love it, and not the less because we find it here on the broad ocean. It is no splendid altar which we are able here to build, and no costly offering. But let it be the offering of grateful and contrite hearts, and it will not be despised. May the sacred fire burn upon it long and steadily; and may He who holds the winds in his fists, and the waters in the hollow of his hand, accept our sacrifices and give us his peace!

We are fellow-voyagers over the sea of life, and to the same eternal home. Let not the God of the Sabbath be dishonored here, nor his Sabbaths themselves testify against us! If we hope for God's blessing, let us keep the day holy to the end of it. Let us prize these seasons of worship, and fervently pray that they may fit us for that world where there is no temple, and where there is no more sea! Wherever we go, let us make it appear that the Sabbath is “our delight, holy of the Lord, honorable;” and by our exemplary observance of it, and cheerful performance of its duties, enjoy its blessings ourselves, and extend them to our fellow-men.

The *Sabbath* ! how rich in mercy is the very name of this heaven-born day ! What unequalled blessings follow in its train ! How noiseless its tread upon the retiring footsteps of the busy week ! How welcome the indications of its return, hushing the din of this world's strife and toil ; and as the setting sun goes down, whispers in the ear of unthinking man that the appointed day of rest approaches ! How seasonable its intimations that it is befitting him to dismiss his cares, and prepare himself for an interview with his Maker ! And when the sound of the midnight bell falls on a slumbering world, and the watchman's cry tells the departed hour, it seems as it were the response of Heaven's glad tidings, the song of the heavenly Watchers' repeated, "Glory to God in the highest ; on earth peace, and good will to men." And as the Sabbath's dawn advances, how many delightful, thrilling reminiscences crowd upon the soul ! A voice from Sinai seems to say to us, *This is the day of God ; remember it, and keep it holy.* Bethlehem's shepherds tell of a Saviour born ; Calvary announces a Saviour crucified ; the empty sepulchre of Joseph proclaims a Saviour risen from the dead. "The Lord is risen indeed," and comes to-day to dwell with men on the earth. And then, how many doff the armor of the world, and put on the panoply of heaven. If you listen, you seem to hear the supplications of ten thousand closets. And if you cast your eyes over the habitations of men, you will see that on every dwelling-place of Mount Zion "the Lord creates a fire and smoke." And if you take a wider survey still, what do you behold but temples scattered over hill-top and vale, and the incense of prayer and praise, ascending as a sweet-smelling savor

from earth to heaven ? O when shall the ocean prize this best of all the days of time ! and when, from its wild waters, shall the sons of the ocean waft their praise on the breeze that fans the remotest shore ! Why shall not seamen enjoy the blessing in common with those who dwell on the land ? Why shall not every sailor's heart be an altar ; every cabin, every steerage, and every forecastle a closet ; every ship a floating chapel ; and the *Bethel Flag* become the universal signal that the God of heaven has a dwelling among those who go down to the sea in ships, to do business in the great waters !

SERMON II.

GOD ALMIGHTY.

GENESIS xvii. 1. I am the Almighty God.

MATTER is powerless ; itself moves, and also moves other things, only as it is moved by mind. We do indeed see prodigious agencies in the material world. There is the agency of the mechanical powers ; the agency of steam, and of the elements. But they are all to be traced up to the prior agency of thought, of contrivance, of intellectual effort and impulse. Apart from these, every species, every form, and every combination of matter would be perfectly inert and motionless.

The mind of man accomplishes wonders ; the mind of the Deity, himself a pure Spirit,—all Mind, is infinitely powerful ; it is *almighty*, and able to do all things. “He speaks, and it is done ; he commands, and it stands fast.” He wills, and the object he wills is produced ; his very choice is agency : his mere will is omnipotent. “What his soul desireth, that he doeth.” It costs him no trouble, no effort. To determine is with him to perform. Every thought, every desire, every purpose of this Infinite Mind is pure, omnipotent power, beyond resistance, obstruction, or control.

Let us then contemplate the extent and greatness of God’s almighty power.

I. In the first place, we see it in the *works of creation*.

There is no higher act of power than that of causing positive existence. No creature has the power to *create*—no not a worm, nor a pebble on the shore. Creation is God's work alone. That atom that floats on the breeze, whence was it? Those orbs that light up the azure sky, that sky itself, how came they into being? They were not always. Almighty God made them, and gave them existence, where there was nothing before. He stretched out the heavens by his discretion, and garnished them by his Spirit. He spake and decided the number, the magnitude, the distances, the influence of the unnumbered hosts of stars and planets. He set all the borders of the earth, and fastened its foundations, and laid the measures thereof, and stretched out his line upon it. He stretched out the north over the empty place, and hung the world upon nothing. The fertile plain and the barren desert, the lofty mountain and the humble valley, and the rivers that roll between them, are all his workmanship. And this vast extent of ocean, these deep blue waters, whence were they? who laid them up in store-houses, and made the cloud a garment, and thick darkness a swaddling band for them? Who shut them up with doors, and set bars for them, that they should not break through their decreed place? Well may we say with Job, "I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought is hidden from thee!" Truly "he doeth great things! unsearchable, marvellous things, and that without number!" "Marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; in wisdom hast thou made them all!"

II. In the second place, there are equal exhibitions of God's almighty power in *the works of his providence*.

He is not only the Maker, but the upholder of all things, and their director and governor. His providence is a sort of second creation—creation constantly continued. And throughout the whole of it, there is one continued expression of omnipotence. Men speak of the laws by which the natural world is governed, as though they were something apart from God; while they are God himself, working after the counsel of his own will. They do but unfold the way and manner in which he works in order to accomplish his own wise and benevolent designs. When the earth quakes, men attribute the phenomenon to mere natural causes; but the Scriptures attribute it to God. "*He toucheth the hills and they smoke, the mountains, and they break in pieces;*" the rocks, and "*they melt away like wax;*" the earth, and "*all its foundations are out of place.*" Men have their theories to account for storms and tempests; the Scriptures account for them in another way. "*His way is in the whirlwind, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.*" "*The mountains saw thee, and they trembled;* the overflowing of the water passed by; the deep uttered his voice and lifted up his hands on high." The regular succession of day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest; the rain, the drought, the dew, are familiarly traced by the philosophy of this world to other causes than God. But the Scriptures adopt another and a different philosophy. "*Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days, and caused the day-spring from on high to know his place, that it might take hold of the uttermost parts of the earth? Hast thou divided a water-course for the over-*

flowing of the waters ; or a way for the lightning of thunder, to cause it to rain on the earth where no man is, and on the wilderness where there is no man ? Hath the rain a father ? or who hath begotten the drops of the dew ? Out of whose womb came the ice, and the hoary frost of *heaven*, who hath gendered it ?” “Touching the *Almighty*, we cannot find him out : he is excellent in power and judgment.”

And as it is in the natural, so is it in the moral world. God is its governor, and all the affairs of men are controlled by him. “He is the judge ; he setteth up one, and he putteth down another.” “There are many devices in a man’s heart ; but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.” When empires are to be founded, he founds them ; when they are to be overthrown, he diminishes and brings them low. Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, and all the departed nations, have passed away, because his unseen hand had written their doom. His arm disconcerts the schemes of the wise, breaks the confederacies of the great, and scatters the combinations of all who set themselves to contend with their Maker. We look for them, but they are not to be found. We do but pass by, and they are no more. The only remembrance of them is contained in the history of the past, and that remembrance is pre-eminently the record of the Almighty power that levelled them with the dust. A single look from God, and they were no longer to be found. It is impossible for us to conceive the amazing power with which the Divine administration in the government of this world moves forward. The vast machinery is kept in motion by an invisible, but Almighty hand ; “there is a wheel within a wheel ; and the living creature is within the wheels.”

Sometimes they "move high and dreadful," and as they move, remind us how impotent is the pride of man, and bid us remember that "power belongeth unto God."

III. There are impressive exhibitions of the divine power, in the third place, in the government which God exercises *over the minds of men themselves*.

"Thou knowest, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." Other agents there are besides God; but there is no agent independent of him. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of water he turneth it whithersoever he will." Such is the power of God, that he exercises entire dominion over every order of minds in the universe, from the seraph to the child. So absolutely does he govern, that not even Sir Isaac Newton could have predicted his next thought. Of all the men now living on the earth, not one knows beforehand what thoughts he shall conceive; what purposes he shall form; what words he shall utter; in what pursuits he shall be engaged; what good he shall enjoy, or what evil he shall endure; or how long he shall live, or when or where he shall die; because all his times and ways are in the hands of God.

The power of man never appears more illustrious than when we witness its effects on the *minds* of his fellow man. Chains, prisons, and the sword, furnish faint exhibitions of *power* compared with those which a powerful mind exerts upon the views and conduct, and destiny of mankind. It is a power more to be coveted, than all the mere physical force of the globe. It is a sublime view this, when we contemplate the

power of God over the *minds* of the intelligent creation. It is not the government of a world of passive machinery, but of thinking, moral, accountable men that he administers. He can do more than wield the elements; he can wield the thoughts of men. He can do more than give laws to the world of matter; he can give them to the world of mind. "The Lord God *Omnipotent* reigneth; and let the earth rejoice."

IV. I add, in the fourth place, the *dispensations of God's grace* are affecting expressions of his almighty power.

In every stage of its progress, this grace is almighty. There are obstacles in the way of it which nothing but omnipotence can surmount. The first work it has to accomplish is to take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh. And this is a work which no means, and no motives in the universe can perform. The Bible cannot do it by all its instructions. The Sabbath cannot do it by all its solemnity. Parents cannot do it by all their fidelity and tenderness. Ministers cannot do it by all their preaching. Christians cannot do it by all their example and influence. Judgments cannot do it by all their terrors; and mercies cannot do it by all their persuasive attractions. Plague, famine, war, the fearful thunder and the forked lightning cannot do it. The sea saith, it is not in me to do it; and death and the grave say, it is not in me. But God can do it; God alone, by the efficacy of his own almighty power. This must be superadded to the other influences, or the work is never done. It belongs to his Almighty Spirit, to convince men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment: to make them willing in the day of his power. When his right hand is plucked out of his

bosom, and his mighty arm revealed, every difficulty bows before it. The blind see, the deaf hear, the dead in sin live. Every instance of conversion is a signal instance of divine power. When these signs and wonders are done in the name of the holy child Jesus, what victories are they, what triumphs of Almighty grace! "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Well did the Psalmist say, when his heart was inditing a good matter, and he spake of the things touching the king, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things."

Nor is this all that is done for the subjects of grace. "They are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." And when, after all their conflicts and trials, they at last become fitted for heaven, it will be most truly said of every one of them, "He that hath wrought you for this self-same thing is God." The longer we live, and the more we know of ourselves, if we are Christians, the more shall we wonder at that excellency of power by which any of the sons or daughters of Adam are brought into the divine kingdom, and kept in it! Wonderful,—most wonderful grace!

Let this view of God's omnipotence lead us

1. In the first place, *to strong confidence in God.* It is a source of great comfort to know that God is omnipotent. On every side we have enemies, and are beset with dangers and snares. But God is above them all. Great peace have they whose minds are stayed on God. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, into

which the righteous runneth, and is safe. Their place of defence is the munition of rocks. In the time of trouble, God will hide them in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide them. God is their refuge and strength. Unutterably precious truth! God is thy refuge, Christian, and underneath thee are the everlasting arms. "He is able to make all grace abound toward you." "He is able to keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." He is able to "keep that which you have committed to him, and to raise you up at the last day." Away with trembling and fear! "Who art thou; that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?" Who, O who would not have the Omnipotent God for his friend! Give me this, and let who will be my enemy! Come what will, if the Eternal God be my friend. Yes, let it come—be it what it may. Come life, come death, if God Almighty but say to me, "I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward!"

2. In the next place, our subject teaches us *the extreme folly of those who contend with their Maker*. Multitudes there are, who are not God's friends, but his enemies, and contend with him. They do not love him; they will not obey him; they will not trust in him; they refuse his salvation; and they will live as they please, however much they may displease their Maker.

O ye, who thus trifle with Omnipotence! "Who ever hardened himself against God and prospered?" Before

him angels bow, and devils tremble. The King eternal, immortal, and invisible, is not a being to be thus trifled with. His favor is life; his frown is death. Mock not him who is thus able to save and to destroy. Insult not him, at whose bidding you must make your bed in hell. The black face of the tempestuous cloud warns you, no longer to contend with God. Those flames you have seen dart through the sky, bid you beware how you contend with God. What, O what is a frail, dying man in the hands of this angry God!

Turn ye, turn ye at his reproof. Be persuaded to seek his face. Though your sins be as scarlet, he can make them white as snow; though they be red like crimson, he can make them as wool. Humble yourselves before him, and you will find he has no pleasure in your death. Be in earnest in seeking his face through Jesus Christ, and you will find that you have to deal with one whose mercy is as great as his power. Break off your sins, and you will find that where your sin abounds, his grace much more abounds.

But if you will go on in sin, and thus persevere in contending with God, it is a dark prospect that is before you. It blackens every hour. God's anger will not sleep. His goodness may bear with you a little while, but will ere long become indignation and wrath. In a little while he will brandish his sword, and the blow will fall the heavier because so long delayed. Sickness will come, and you will tremble. Death will come, and you will be afraid to die. You must go into God's presence, and you will be afraid to go. You must be dragged from your grave and stand at his bar, only to be condemned and accursed. There will be no pardon there, and no time for repentance.

O, my friends, rush not headlong to this place of torment! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.

Yet is this mighty power the sinner's hope. What voice is that, and how seasonable and sweet the word it utters, which says, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed *thyself*; but in *me* is thy help!" This same God Almighty is the sinner's helper. "Let him take hold of *my strength*, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." This is the way to turn God's power to good account. That God is omnipotent is the very truth the desponding sinner needs, to raise him at once above all discouragements. O take hold of his everlasting strength. Even Paul could say no more than, "I can do all things, *through Christ Jesus that strengtheneth me.*" Weak and insufficient as you are, there is no room for discouragement so long as your help is in God.

To him be glory, and dominion, and power, and thanksgiving forever. Amen!

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SERMON III.

THE SINNER'S FRIEND.

MATTHEW ix. 19. A friend to sinners.

THE sinner needs a friend, an all-gracious, all-sufficient friend. He needs such a friend, if it were only to comfort him under the trials of life, and carry him safe through them. He needs such a friend to counsel and guide him, because he is prone to evil, and is easily led astray. He needs some one to assist him, and help him on in the journey which has proved so fatal to thousands of his fellow-travellers. He needs help to enable him to overcome his habits of wickedness, to subdue his spiritual enemies, and disappoint all those who are doing what they can to lead him to destruction. He needs a friend at home and abroad, in sickness and in health; and more than all, when he comes to pass through the dark valley of death, when he goes up to the judgment, to enter upon his unalterable eternity, O then he needs a friend who will stand by him to cheer him, and make his cause his own.

But is there on earth or in heaven any such friend as this? Yes, there is *One*—one such friend, and only one in the universe. I hear some of you say, Who is he? where is he to be found? I wish I had such a friend as this!

Well, I am to speak to you about him; to tell you

who he is, and where and how he may be sought and found. And you may be assured that, however evil, sinful, guilty and wretched you may be, that if you come to him, he will in no wise cast you out. He never did refuse, and he never will refuse, any who come to him. You have often read in the Bible about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that great and gracious Being who "came to seek and save that which was lost." He is "God manifest in the flesh;" the only Mediator between God and man, the great Immanuel, God with us. He it is who is "the friend of sinners," creatures of yesterday and worms of the dust as they are. He stoops to their low condition; and such is his mercy toward them, that "angels desire to look into it," and the more they think of it, the more they wonder. He has revealed himself as the friend of sinners in his word, and his uniform conduct shows that these professions and declarations of friendship may be confided in.

There are several different views which may be taken of this interesting thought.

I. In the first place, Jesus Christ is a friend whose *personal character and excellence render his friendship of unspeakable value and importance.*

We have friends among our fellow-men; and if they are great and good men, we highly value their friendship. If by any indiscretion, or neglect, or folly of our own, we have lost their friendship, we feel the loss. Yet, for the most part, earthly friends are not greatly to be relied on. There is too much sin and imperfection in men; too much error and weakness, too much pride and impatience, too much that is untender and

unforgiving, too much of self, to justify us in counting largely on their friendship.

The angels in heaven, too, are the friends of fallen, sinning man. They are beings of great benevolence, great kindness, and loveliness of character. They have done much to save men: they are doing much more, and often "encamp around them" to defend them from harm; and they are ready to do all in their power. They are all "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation." But they are finite beings, dependent on Almighty God, and in the scale and gradation of their existence, but a little above men. Neither the best, nor the wisest, nor the most powerful men on earth, nor the greatest and best of all the angels in heaven, are, or can be such friends to us, as the friend I am speaking of.

There is no imperfection or blemish in the character of Christ, that should ever make his friendship suspected. There is no excellence anywhere to be compared with his. There is no such greatness and goodness to be anywhere found as dwell in him; no such intellectual and moral worth, so unstained, so unobscured, even by a passing cloud. He is all light, and in him there is no darkness at all. He is not more exalted, than he is condescending. Though "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," he "dwells with the humble and contrite." Though all nations are as a drop of a bucket before him, and no created mind can search out his unfathomable glory, yet does he stoop to dwell with men of the meanest rank, to "choose the base things of the world," to "suffer little children to come to him," and himself to wash the feet of his followers. He is not more just than gracious, nor is he

more gracious than just—"a *just* God and a *Saviour*, there is none like him." More glorious is he than all created beings, yet "the servant of all," and the lowest of all in humility. The infinite majesty with which he "rides on the heavens, and is terrible out of his holy places," is equalled only by the meekness which, "when reviled, reviles not again," which forgives his enemies, and prays for his murderers. His infinite worthiness of all good is equalled only by his patience under all suffering; his supreme dominion and sovereignty only by his filial obedience and submission; his self-sufficiency by his self-denial; his native riches by his abject poverty; his renown as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," by his love and tenderness as "the Lamb that was slain." Where the power of other friends is limited, his is almighty; where their knowledge, and wisdom, and judgment are questionable, and they are deceived, or mistaken, and perplexed; he is never in error, never deceived, never embarrassed, because his comprehensive mind knows all things.

Such a friend is Christ. And if other friends are valued in proportion to their excellence, their rank, their influence, and the strength and ardor of their attachment, how ought his friendship to be valued who is so infinitely above all creatures!

II. Jesus Christ, in the second place, is the friend of those who, *without him, would be utterly friendless*.

There is weight in the proverb, "a friend in need is a friend indeed." Who is more friendless than the man who is lost and ruined by sin, and has no interest in the favor of the adorable God? There is a solitude, a melancholy in his ruin, which is like the condition of the mariner who has fallen overboard in a dark

night, and when the storm is raging. No ear heard the fall ; no eye sees him ; the mingled tempest rushes furiously ; the gallant ship is past hearing, and he feels alone amid the wide and dark ocean. " Help is far, and death is nigh."

There are times when the sinner feels that he is lost. Somehow or other, he knows not how, he has lost his interest in the concerns of time. He has no relish for the world. Its riches and its pleasures seem to him but vanity, and the noise of its mirth fills him with melancholy and distress. The cheerful sunlight is overshadowed, and the clouds are dark and gloomy. His honors wither :

" The blue heaven wither'd ; and the moon and sun,
And all the stars, and the green earth, and morn
And evening wither'd.—
Withered to him is all the universe."

He is " without God, and without hope in the world." Conscience, that ought to be his friend, has become his enemy ; it is troubled in view of his outward sins, and the inward plague of his own heart. All his wonted excuses for sin have mouldered away and are forgotten ; what once, in his own view, palliated them, now aggravates them all. Forgotten sins are called to remembrance ; secret sins are set before him ; open sins rush upon his thoughts in all their odiousness ; and present sin, unrepented of, binds him in its inexorable bondage. He feels like " an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenant of promise." He feels alone in the world, and he is afraid to be alone. He is afraid of God, because he is afraid that God is his enemy.

In such a condition, the Son of God, the Saviour of lost sinners, addresses him with the voice of a friend. He calls him. He says to him, "Hearken unto me, ye that are stout-hearted and far from righteousness; behold I bring near my righteousness, and my salvation shall not tarry!" He says to him, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" He stoops to his sins, to his cares, to his fears, to his solitude and helplessness. Never sought as he ought to be, often abused, despised, rejected, trampled on, yet this Saviour becomes his friend.

It is a wondrous truth which was just now uttered, that the very *sins* of this lost and disconsolate sinner interest this compassionate Saviour. The sins of men are the cause of all their woes and helplessness; and these woes touch his heart. The greatest sinners have the greatest need; and where there is the greatest need, and that need is most deeply felt, there he is wont to show his kindness and friendship. He "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" it was to make good the declaration, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help!"

III. In the third place, Jesus Christ is the *most efficient* friend.

Others may love us, but their love may be unavailing. Others may wish us well, and desire to make us holy and happy; yet can they do us very little good. Other friendships may be inconstant and weak; they may hesitate and falter, and become remiss and forgetful, because they are not willing to make the sacrifices that are necessary to our well-being. But where other friends fail us, his friendship is available to our every want. He is as willing to befriend us, as he is able.

No matter how great the sacrifices that our condition calls for ; where they are the greatest, there his friendship is the most prompt, the most active and self-denying.

Do you ask for proof of this ? Go to his word and read it there. Go also and read it at his cross. He was a sufferer there ; never was there any sorrow like unto his sorrow : never was there such a sufferer in the universe. But why did he suffer ? He had done nothing to deserve it ; for he was holy and harmless, and not even the holy God could accuse him of sin. No ; they were *your* sins and *your* sorrows that he bore, the just in the room and stead of the unjust. When men as sinners were obnoxious to the sword of justice, and ignominy and woe were coming upon them like a flood, he put himself in their place, bore the suffering and despised the shame. When the bitter cup was mingled for them, he took it from their hands, and himself drank it to the dregs. When wrath was coming upon them to the uttermost, and the Avenger would take no denial, no alleviation, no delay, he gave his own life the ransom. Where is there such another friend as this ? “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his *friends* ; but God commendeth his love toward us, in that when we were *enemies*, Christ died for us.”

It is this that makes the friendship of Christ so effective. The sinner that humbly looks to Christ, and receives him as his Saviour and surety, will find to his joy that the blood of this great sacrifice has paid the full demands of avenging justice, and that justice asks no more than what a trusting faith thus offers. This single act of friendship is also the pledge and earnest of

every other expression of it that the sinner needs. There is nothing his friendship will not lead him to do for sinners, after he has thus given *himself* for them.

IV. In the fourth place, Jesus Christ is the *most unwearied, faithful, and unchanging friend*.

Once secured, his friendship lasts. "Nothing shall separate us from his love." It bears long and loves still. It bears with ingratitude, with perverseness, with jealousy and suspicion, and still it loves. Men are slow to believe it, slow to learn it, slow to repay, and quick to forget it; but still it is the same. Its current is too deep and strong to be checked or diverted from its course; and though obstacle upon obstacle is thrown in its way, it still flows deep and strong.

It is rather a contrast to all earthly friendships, than a comparison with them, that is presented by the friendship of Christ to sinners. Earthly friends are fickle and changing; he is "the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever." "Whom he loves, he loves to the end." The changes of this world do not affect his friendship. Earthly friends are forgetful; the best of men, and the most watchful and tender, are sometimes forgetful and thoughtless. "They may forget," says he, "yet will I not forget." They may become languid and weary; they may be hasty and rash, provoked and angry; but he never slumbers nor sleeps; he is "slow to anger and of great kindness, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." Even a parent's friendship, a mother's love, may be exhausted; years of disappointed hope may chill it and depress it into apathy. But such is not the friendship of Christ. His is that *tried* friendship that is far above the instability of those passions which put the soul alternately into a ferment of jealousy and appre-

hension, and sink it into despondency, and distract and toss it like so many restless waves. Glorious, soul-reviving truth! it never alters. Whether the sun cheers, or the clouds grow dark, it never alters. No change of condition alters it, nor is it altered by passing years. It decays not with withering fame, or wasted fortunes, or decaying time. •

“E'en down to old age my people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And then when gray hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne.”

I add, •

V. In the fifth and last place, Jesus Christ is a friend who is *entitled by his own merits to claim for his friends all that his love desires to bestow.*

He has nothing to ask for himself, but everything to ask and claim for them. When he consented to become obedient unto death, the court of heaven engaged by solemn covenant to give him all he should desire on their behalf. “Ask of me, my Son, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” The reward he asks for, and claims, is the pardon of guilty men who trust in him; their acceptance and justification, their sanctification and their eternal glory. He claims it for services rendered by himself; it is but his rightful and stipulated recompense. This claim was completed when he expired on the cross, and acknowledged when he rose from the grave. All the good ever intended for sinful men is measured out and dispensed as a reward to Christ. Whatever the sinner needs is included in his promised inheritance.

And it is this which gives the friend of sinners such claims and such influence where the sinner most needs them. He has a friend at the court of heaven, whose merit is known and whose rights are acknowledged; and they are merit and rights that are sure to be honored. It is but for him to plead their cause, and it must prevail. If he does but point them out and say, "Deliver them," they shall be delivered from going down to the pit. It is but for him to say, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me, where I am," and they shall be with him, and behold his glory.

Earthly friends die. We weep because we shall see their face no more. Their affectionate heart no longer beats for us; it is cold. They have left us the rich legacy of their example and their prayers; and now their counsels of love sound in our ears only from the tomb. Sinners have a friend who never dies. "Fear not," saith he, "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forever more!" He lives no more to die; and their life "is hid with him in God."

Such is the sinner's friend. The more you know of him, the more ought you to confide in him. If you have felt your need of him, and have actually placed all your hopes in him, you will find him faithful and true. It is not worthiness he seeks for in you; he is the friend of *sinners*; he came to "justify the *ungodly*;" the blessings of his friendship are of pure grace, and he gives them "without money and without price."

He is the sailor's friend. It was from the lakes of Judea that he called some of his first disciples. It is you he calls to-day. Do not doubt it. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold his hands; and reach hither thy

hand, and thrust it into his side ; be no more faithless, but believing." Reason hesitates here, because here are heights to which her eagle wing never soars. Conscience hesitates and trembles, because here are depths so dark and fearful that one dare not penetrate them. But faith triumphs here, because "it is Christ that died," and he is the sinner's friend.

Ye who are the friends of Christ, take heed how you abuse and betray his love. Be watchful to act the part of friends toward your Divine Lord. Humbling to be thought of, it is in the house of his friends that he sometimes is the most deeply wounded. Be you never so treacherous as to cause him pain and dishonor. Henceforth, when that hand, or those feet, or those lips are tempted to evil, let the remembrance of his friendship wake you to jealousy, shut your lips, guide those feet, and stay that hand. And when that restless and rebel heart wanders, O let the thought of him arrest the prohibited purpose, and restrain and subdue the evil desire !

I shall close this discourse with the thought with which I began it. You need a friend. No class of men need such a friend as Christ more than seamen. Earthly friends with you may be few in number ; for once then gain his friendship, and prove his love who "sticketh closer than a brother." He will stand by you when all other friends forsake you. He will not fail you amid those calamities that "put lover and friend far from you, and your acquaintance into darkness." He will be with you in storm and in sunshine, and dwell with you even here, afar off upon the sea. He will be with you in trials ; nor will you have to struggle in your conflicts alone. He hath said—what is it that

he hath said, and said, sailor boy, to *thee*? He hath said, "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee!*" O, what a sweet promise is this! Make but him your friend, and he will stand by you to the last. His love will breathe peace over your pillow of death, and embalm with its fragrance the sepulchre where your dust shall rest in hope. And when these seas of time shall have been sailed over; when this low earth where you have sinned, and toiled, and suffered, and wept, and died, shall be left behind, and all its associations shall be forgotten; you shall join that company who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"One there is above all others,
Well deserves the name of friend;
His is love beyond a brother's,
Costly, free, and knows no end.

"Which of all our friends, to save us,
Could, or would have shed his blood?
But this Saviour died to have us
Reconciled in him to God.

"When he lived on earth abased,
Friend of sinners was his name;
Now, above all glory raised,
He rejoices in the same.

"Oh for grace our hearts to soften!
Teach us, Lord, at length to love;
We alas! forget too often,
What a friend we have above."

SERMON IV.

UNBELIEVERS WITHOUT HOPE.

EPHESIANS ii. 12. Having no hope.

No hope! The condition of such a man may well excite concern and commiseration. Men can live and be happy without riches, without honors; they can suffer manfully, and struggle through accumulated sorrows, if there be but a glimmering light in their path. They can rise superior to depression, if there is anything to lull the terrors of apprehension, and they may but feel bound to the world by the consoling, the magic influence of hope. But when this last, silent stream of consolation is dried up, there is nothing left on which the mind may repose its fears, or its griefs. It has no resources left; it sinks unfortified under the burden of its calamity; and the despairing, sullen sufferer has but the one desire left him, "O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave!"

Such instances of suffering are rare; and we naturally ask, Of whom is the apostle speaking, whose condition is so emphatically and mournfully described, as "having no hope?"

Perhaps it is the man who has committed the unpardonable sin, and for whom there is no forgiveness, either in this world, or that which is to come. Or it may be the man who is in the agonies of death, and is

just about to appear before his Judge to hear his doom. Or is it the state of the damned that he is speaking of? No, it is none of these. They are men who are living within this world of mercy; who were "without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, *having no hope*, and without God in the world." The reason why they had no hope was, that they were thus alienated from God.

Man is no earth-born creature, but destined to immortality. There are strong desires of the future implanted in his bosom. The present does not satisfy him; present things lose their relish and pall on his immortal appetite. There is no resting-place beneath the sun, where he sits down satisfied. If he looks not beyond the attainments, or researches of earth, what hope has he that is worth the name? It terminates on earth; it exhausts itself on objects that may pass away and be dissolved in an hour. Nothing is more uncertain, than that such objects can be attained; and if attained, whether they may not be lost; and if not lost, whether they can satisfy. They are temporary, delusive, and absolutely degrading. Man himself is vain, apart from his immortality. They are withered hopes that are fixed upon the things of time; hopes that are desolate; hopes that conduce not to the end and perfection of our being; hopes which, for the most part, man enjoys in common with brutes. Such hopes are a fiction of the imagination—a false elation of the mind—a mere image and semblance of hope—a mistake, a folly, an infatuation which it will require "eternity to deplore, and eternity to comprehend."

There may also be hopes of future and eternal good,

that have no good and solid foundation. There are religious hopes that are vague and uncertain, changeful and fluctuating, because they have nothing to rest upon. They are indulged with great hesitation, because those who indulge them are enveloped in doubt, and shrouded in darkness, on all the great subjects which relate to their immortal well-being. Some hope because they have the form of godliness; some because they think it would be unjust and cruel for God to destroy them; some because they persuade themselves they possess the religion of the Bible, when they are utterly destitute of it; some because they believe that all men will be saved. Their hopes rest upon a foundation of sand; and in the high and important sense in which the Scriptures speak of hope, they are no hope at all.

No man can decide whether his hope of a blessed immortality rests on a true and solid foundation without going to the Bible. Jesus Christ, whose Spirit is the author of this revelation, himself came from heaven, in order to assure us of the reality of the heaven from which he came. His redemption solves the dark problem, "how can man be just with God." He alone has procured eternal life for guilty men; has made an adequate and accepted satisfaction to divine justice, so that God can now "be just and the justifier of him that believeth." Here is the sinner's hope. The rock Christ is the only support of the perishing soul. Reason and philosophy may build their hopes on nature; grasping self-righteousness and towering pride may raise the edifice of their expectations on presumption; error and imagination may build their "castles in the air;" but Christian hope, the only hope that is

not as the spider's web, rests on this sure foundation that is laid in Zion. Every other is fluctuating and unstable ; it has no permanency, no reality ; it is a refuge of lies ; put it to the test, and you detect its fallacy—it disappears—it is swept away. No other foundation sustains the hope that is built upon it. All other hope perishes when God takes away the soul ; it is the death-grasp of the merest presumption ; it is as the "giving up of the ghost ;" it is not *hope*. When trouble and changes come, it is in trepidation and alarm ; it is no anchor when the storm beats heavily. The day is coming that will test the hopes of men. It will be a wrathful day that lays waste every vain confidence. It is a bewildered mind that ; it is dissatisfied with itself ; it courts deception ; it "sports itself with its own deceivings ;" it has *no hope*, that rests not on Christ.

Hope that is firm and true, must also not only rest on this sure foundation, but its genuineness must be evinced by good evidence. There is a hope for eternal life which is without ourselves, and wrought out and perfected by the finished work of Christ alone ; and there is a personal preparation for heaven that is within ourselves, that is inwrought in the soul by the operation of God's Spirit. What Christ has done *for* us is the foundation of our hope ; what he has done *in* us is the evidence of its genuineness. It is one thing for the foundation to be laid ; another to build on that foundation. The foundation stands, though I refuse to build upon it ; while my building upon it, by humbly and gratefully receiving Christ Jesus, furnishes me the only assurance that I am "growing up an holy temple in the Lord." "Christ *in* you the hope of glory"—this is the evidence of a good hope. "Hope maketh not ashamed because

the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost." And "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." Those there are who profess to have hope in Christ, who neither believe in him, nor love him, nor obey him. Men may not persuade themselves that they have a good hope, unless they can discover these marks of it. They have no hope—no hope that looketh within the veil—none that is the precursor and earnest of heaven—none that will not in a little while be turned into despair. It is a hope that is dead, and severed from all vital contact with Christ and holiness. It dwells among the tombs; it is desolate and dark; it is a living death; a hope that is hopeless.

Let us then be *urged to greater fidelity in inspecting the nature, the foundation, and the practical influence of our hope.* Self-delusion in this matter may overtake us as well as others. We may not take it for granted that we have a good hope, without honest and thorough inquiry. "As ye have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so *walk* in him." If you do not glory in his cross, because by it the world is crucified to you, and you to the world; if your hope rests on anything but Christ, and does not lead you to progressive obedience to his will; it is false and spurious. If, upon impartial inquiry, you find your hope is one that has mocked you, give it up. If it be so with any of you, I pray God you may be convinced of it. It is a miserable and guilty state that you are in, and you must see and feel it, if you are ever brought out of it, and into the glorious hope and liberty of the children of God. It is an awful thing to be thus deceived; but blessed be God, there is a way of return and recovery. The Saviour,

who died, proclaims, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Every one that will may come in this "new and living way." Listen to his invitations; embrace his offer; lay hold of his promises.

"My soul would fain indulge a hope
To reach the heavenly shore;
And when I drop this dying flesh,
That I shall sin no more.

"But O! this dreadful heart of sin,
It may deceive me still;
And while I look for joys above,
May plunge me down to hell.

"Come then, O blessed Jesus! come,
To me thy Spirit give;
Shine through a dark, benighted soul,
And bid a sinner live."

Some of you are *professedly without Christ, without God in the world, and are sensible that you have no hope that can stand the test that tries the spirits of men.* What shall we say to you? My friends, you are making a hazardous experiment, and one that will certainly disappoint you. You cannot live thus, and yet hope to die a peaceful death, and enjoy a happy immortality. It were a desperate experiment, equally opposed to the truth of God, to all the known principles of his government, and to God himself. Your hope deserves not the name of hope; for God is not in all your thoughts. God is not your friend; for you have made him your enemy. Instead of loving him, you have alienated yourselves from his love, and have boldly said to him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of

thy ways." Religion is a burden to you ; its privileges give you no joy ; you drag its hopes as the galley slave drags his heavy chain. This world is your idol, and could you command its bounty, you would be content to dwell in it for ever. Believe me it is time for you to take the alarm. You are going to your own place, and the graves of the slain are there. Your descent to it is rapid ; it is as dark as it is precipitous. A few slanting and oblique beams of the sun may fall upon it, and that sun is going down. Here and there a projecting bough, or tree, scathed by the lightning, which has twisted its roots into the fissures of the rock, may intercept your progress, and break your fall ; but your feet shall slide in due time, and to that world below, that bottomless abyss, whence there is no return.

But I would fain believe there are some among you whose hope is as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast. To all such persons, the subject on which we have been dwelling addresses the most delightful encouragement. A Christian seaman has the same high character and the same blessed promise, that belong to those who pursue a less perilous, and more tranquil calling. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, into which the righteous runneth and is safe. You may be "in dangers oft," but he that keepeth you shall neither slumber, nor sleep. "Though you take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, there shall his hand lead you, and his right hand shall hold you." No matter where you live, or where, or when you die ; your "life is hid with Christ in God, and when he who is your life shall appear, you also shall appear with him in glory." No matter where your mortal body may find its last rest ; whether in the

tranquil grave-yard, and in the place of your fathers' sepulchres, in the deep earth ; or in the deeper sea ; it is enough that the great Saviour watches over it as his own, and at his voice it shall come forth.

If you are thus "begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead," let it be seen that yours is a good hope through grace. Cherish such a hope as this, and honor it by your habitual deportment, fearing God and departing from evil. Cast not away this confidence, for it hath great recompense of reward. Hope is the flower of Paradise, left to scatter its rich perfume over a dreary world. It lives even under lowering skies, and is watered by the spray of the ocean. It enhances your pleasures, and refreshes your toil ; it cheers your melancholy and soothes your sorrows ; it heals your wounds, and dissipates your fears. Clouds may hang over the lowly vale of your earthly pilgrimage ; but the light of hope shall scatter them. Night may shut in and cover the dark passage which leads to immortality ; but the light of hope shall stream in full glory there, and clear up the dark valley. "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most to be commiserated." It is not in this life that your hopes centre ; you will not be thus miserable, because disappointed. Nor is it an imaginary happiness in an imaginary future that you are searching after—grasping at shadows, and rejecting the substance. Hope may be firm that anticipates eternal realities. It is fast anchored, and enters into that which is within the veil, "whither the Forerunner has for us entered." The time is short ; be you sober, and watch unto prayer. "As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation and

godliness. Be ye sober, I say, and watch unto prayer, lest Satan take advantage of you; lest you grieve the Spirit of God; and lest, after the lusts of your former ignorance, a wound be inflicted on your hopes that may not be healed, though you seek it carefully and with tears.

SERMON V.

THE CURSE OF ABANDONMENT RELUCTANTLY EXECUTED.

HOSEA ii. 8. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim?

THERE is no being in the universe to whom men do so much injustice as the God of heaven. Those who most esteem and love him, are far from giving him that place in their esteem and love which he deserves; while those who hate him, look upon him as a very tyrant, and think and speak of him as the cruellest despot in the world.

The Scriptures exhibit him as lovely, as he is great; as amiable, as he is infinite. And what we are more specially concerned to remark, is, they set forth the tenderness of his character, in those very acts in which he appears to men as hard and severe.

I see not how any person of fair and candid mind can read the text without looking upon it as a most amiable—nay, a most touching view of God. Admah and Zeboim were two cities on the western shore of what is now the Dead Sea, that were destroyed by fire from heaven, when Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed for their wickedness. Ephraim was the younger son of Joseph, and was reckoned among the sons of Jacob. His descendants constituted a distinct tribe,

which in process of time became numerous and powerful. Upon the revolt of the ten tribes from Judah and Benjamin, Ephraim became the seat of empire for the ten tribes, and the whole ten tribes were called Ephraim. From the time of this separation, the ten tribes became to the last degree degenerate, and God threatened to abandon them to the fate of Sodom and the cities of the plain. All hope of reforming this idolatrous people seemed to have died away, and with it all hope of their salvation. Justice seems to have entered upon the process of destruction; but just as the blow was about to fall, the arm of Omnipotence hesitates, and the sword is returned to its scabbard. It is an irrecoverable blow when once it is struck; once kindled, the flame is one that is never quenched. It were God's strange work thus to abandon the creatures he has made to destruction. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?"

I. The first remark suggested by this affecting representation, is, that there are instances in which men are given up of God.

All men who finally perish, wax worse and worse, until the cup of their iniquity is full. We know not where the point is in this descending path, beyond which there is no return; but such a point there is, and when the irrecoverable step is taken, and the sinner is ripe for destruction, it is in vain to persuade him, in vain to pray, or even hope for him.

It is a very common thing for God to deprive such persons of all the ordinary means of salvation. The Bible, the Sabbath, the ministry of reconciliation, the offers of mercy, and all the things which belong to their

peace, are hidden from their eyes. "Where no vision is, the people perish;" they are like the heathen, who, because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, are given over to a reprobate mind. Take away from any man, or any class of men the ordinary means of salvation, and you leave them little hope, because little opportunity of entering the kingdom of God.

From such persons, God also is very apt to withdraw and withhold the influences of his Spirit. He gives his Spirit in order to preserve or rescue men from a reprobate mind; when the sinner is abandoned, these influences are taken away. The Spirit of God no longer convinces him of sin; nor condescends to demolish his excuses and show him his lost condition. His conscience is no longer troubled; he no longer trembles at the coming wrath, nor feels the need of a Saviour. He has so long resisted the Spirit of God, that he has taken his final departure from him. And the consequence is that he laughs and sports on the brink of perdition, and does not awake until he awakes in hell. God has said, "my Spirit shall not always strive with man." But he also says, "Woe be unto thee when I depart from thee!" When he thus departs, he departs to return no more: the fate of the sinner is sealed. There may be a short reprieve for him; but his fate is sealed. Wherever and however long he may live, and wherever he may wander over sea or land, not one ray of heavenly light shall beam on his way. He has forsaken God; God has forgotten him, and he has no helper.

From those who have thus grieved his Spirit, God also more usually withholds those restraints upon wickedness which are imposed by his providence. His patience has become wearied, and he leaves them to

themselves. They little know how much they are indebted to his restraining and preventing providence ; nor how sad the sentence that is passed upon them, when he commissions these ten thousand restraints and preventives to let them alone. Let the sinner loose from all these, and it takes but little to make his heart like a rock of adamant. Nothing moves him ; he is rash and reckless ; he is ungovernable and headstrong ; he is just fitted for perdition. God suffers his law to have its course upon him and he dies in his iniquity. His character is formed ; and the divine long-suffering has done for him all that it can perform. He needs no farther day of grace ; it is of no use to wait upon him any longer. Mercy has uttered her last admonition, and given him over to the hands of inexorable justice. He has not a friend in the universe. Heaven has no helper for him now. God himself is his enemy. Justice, so slow to anger, and so long delayed, now takes its course. The tempest beats upon him ; keen and bitter are its blasts of irritated and eternal vengeance.

Thus it is that the sinner is sometimes given up of God. Now we say it is a fearful act thus to give him up. A righteous act it is, none may fault it ; but it is not the less grievous and fearful. Holiness calls for just such hatred of iniquity as this ; justice demands just honors. They have been multiplied in ages that are past, and will be repeated in ages yet to come. Yet it is most reluctantly that such deeds are done, and that such acts of Almighty vengeance must be recorded. We are at no loss to understand the solicitude, the tenderness, which would stay, and if possible, arrest the blow. It is but a natural expression of all that is kind and Godlike in the Deity, that he should be repre-

sented as saying, "How shall I give thee up? how shall I deliver thee? how shall I set thee as Admah, and make thee as Zeboim?" The sentence is too terrible a one not to be reluctantly executed; nor does God ever execute it but with reluctance.

We shall dwell a few moments on this truth, and illustrate it by the following considerations. We prove it from what God is, from what he has said, and from what he has done.

1. In the first place, it is evident from *what God is*. There are those who can contemplate the abandonment and perdition of men with indifference; they care not whether they are saved or lost. There are those, also, who contemplate such a disaster with a gratified and malignant pleasure; and who, could they execute the sentence, would execute it with right good will. But they are vile men that feel thus; they are more like devils than like men. It is the devil's work to tempt and seduce men to destruction, and glory in their death.

But God is no such being as this. He does not look on the sinner's destruction, even with indifference, much less with pleasure. God is good; God is love. Goodness is his distinguishing character; it is his glory, and may be said to constitute his whole nature. He is kind to the meanest, to the vilest, to the most ungrateful of his creatures. "He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." No man can believe that such a being made men on purpose to damn them; that he takes pleasure in the death of the sinner; and that he waits eagerly for the opportunity and the time to destroy them. No, no; it would be making him a very different being from what he is, to suppose that it is

any pleasure to him that the wickedest sinner in the world should lie down in hell. He may consign him, and unless he repents, will consign him to everlasting sorrow; but nothing but necessity, nothing but firm and unyielding principle, nothing but the safety of his great empire, would ever urge him to such an act of punitive justice. "Fury is not in him." He has not one feeling of cruelty, one malignant emotion in his bosom. There is no being in the universe whose heart is so full of tenderness as his.

2. But we may advert, in the second place, to *what he has said*. I mean what he has said upon this subject. And what has he said? what is he now saying? When he revealed his name to Moses, it was "The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Again he says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." Elsewhere he declares that "he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." And as though he doubted if men would believe him, before heaven and earth he makes the still more solemn and emphatic asseveration, "*As I live*, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" In perfect accordance with declarations like these are the urgent and pressing invitations of his grace. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come." "All ye that are weary and heavy laden, come unto me." "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 of the water of life freely." Of the same import and spirit are the commands of his Gospel, when

he says, "Wash you, make you clean;" "repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin;" "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." If there are warnings in his word, they are to induce men to flee from the wrath to come; if there are exhortations and admonitions, they are to urge them to lay hold on eternal life. God would not thus invite, and command, and admonish, and exhort men to escape from hell and flee to heaven, if he had no benevolent hesitation, no scruples of tenderness, no solicitude, no reluctance to destroy. There are so many declarations in his word which show the spirit expressed in our text, that we find it difficult to make a selection of them. We beg you to read his word; to listen to the melting appeals of his compassion there; to mark the struggle within his heart, as he gives up the incorrigible to their doom; and after he has given them up, to hear him say, "O that thou hadst known the things which belong to thy peace."

3. Let us advert then in the third place, *to what he has done*. "Actions speak louder than words." What has he done, in order to show men that if he must destroy, it is only because he must, and not because he delights so to do. First of all, he sent his Son to seek and to save that which was lost; through trials, through shame, through the humiliation of our nature, and the agony of the accursed tree. He has made his works and providence subservient to this redemption, urging its claims and unfolding its tenderness. He has revealed his truths and grace in his word; he has instituted the Sabbath and its sanctuaries and ministrations, and so multiplied the means of grace and salvation, that

it is difficult for us to see how could he have done more than he has already done. Never did sinner come to him who was cast out ; never did a poor prodigal return to him, but he was made welcome, and there was joy on his return, both on earth and in heaven. And even those whom he has been constrained to destroy, has he borne with, with great long-suffering. He has waited upon them, till further waiting was useless. There is not a reprobate now in the world of darkness, whose history does not honor the Divine clemency and forbearance. He keeps back the blow till he can keep it back no longer, till the last hour in the death-warrant of the sentenced offender is on the wing. And even then he reluctates—even then he hesitates to strike—even then he is saying, “How shall I give them up? how shall I set thee as Admah, how shall I make thee as Zeboim?” And not till then is the hardened reprobate given over to the tormentors.

Some of you, my friends, God may thus give up; but if he does so, it will not be because he has no regard for you, nor that your eternal welfare is with him a matter of no concern. It will be through your own folly and fault, and because you are so sinful. Sin he must hate, and the incorrigible sinner he must destroy. He cannot help pitying, but he cannot help cursing him. It were more than his honor is worth to hold such a man guiltless.

It is a fearful thing to be thus given up of God ; I pray you see to it that you are not thus abandoned. Now God offers you his mercy ; in a little while, the voice of his mercy will be dumb. You have his Sabbaths now ; and they cheer you. They are full of hope. But these sweet cheerings of this day of the Son of Man,

these bright hopes will ere long become depression and despair, if you seek not more earnestly to enter into the kingdom. What you need is the same sincerity in seeking, which God expresses in offering you eternal life ; the same reluctance to endure, which he feels in inflicting, the death you deserve. His sincerity in offering is indorsed by motives as tender and endearing as his own infinite and loving mind knows how to express ; his reluctance in inflicting is testified by expositions, and entreaties, and tears. Will you be unmindful of them—deaf to them ? Is there nothing that can persuade you to be holy and happy ? Will nothing induce you to become willing to be saved ?” “ Wilt thou not be made whole ? When shall it once be ? Will you,—why will you die ?”

SERMON VI.

SIN DETECTED AND EXPOSED.

NUMBERS xxxii. 23. And be sure your sin will find you out.

THE Great God is a terrible enemy to all sin. He cannot look upon it without abhorrence. He solemnly commands men not to commit it; and if they have committed it, he requires them to repent of it, to forsake it, and to repair to the blood of Jesus Christ that it may be washed away. This is their only hope; and he urges them to do this, so that "their iniquity may not be their ruin."

Yet, strange to say, there are very many persons who *will sin*; they love to sin; they are determined to sin, be the consequences what they may. But they do not mean to be found out; they sin secretly, and have an inward hope that their wickedness will never be known.

Now, God says to all such persons, "Be sure your sin will *find you out*." Nothing is more true than this; and I wish, by God's blessing, so to exhibit and prove this truth, that all may see, and feel it; may forsake their sins, and find mercy. I remark, therefore,

I. In the first place, that the man who indulges himself in secret sin *has, within his own bosom, a conscience which will betray him*.

He is acquainted with his own sin; if nobody else knows it, he himself knows it. King Solomon said to

Shimei, the Benjamite, who abused David in the day of his calamity, and cursed him, "Thou knowest all the wickedness which thy heart is privy to, that thou didst to David, my father: therefore the Lord shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head." No man need expect to keep his sins secret, so long as he knows them himself. He may forget them, and for a while lose sight of them; but when his memory comes to be refreshed, and he is reminded of them; when he is forced to call them to remembrance, and cannot help reflecting upon them, nor divert his mind from the melancholy subject; the only relief he has is to make them known. I have known of men who stole money from their employers, and nobody knew it but themselves, whose conscience was so burdened with the sin, that they could not rest until they had gone and confessed it, and made restitution. I have read of a murderer, who had wickedly killed one of his fellow creatures, and who never was detected by all the search that could be made, who, years after the crime was committed, was so troubled in his own conscience for what he had done, that he went one day into open court, and told the judges that he was the guilty murderer. Men will always expose their own sins when they find greater relief of mind in confessing them than in keeping them secret. And they had often rather confess them, and know the worst, than suffer the slow flame to be always burning in their own bosoms.

There are sins with which no man can trust himself. His conscience will tell of them. When he was about to commit them, she tried to prevent him; by all the means in her power she tried to restrain him. She whispered in his ear, not to do the fearful deed; and

told him at the time, that if he would not listen to her, she would expose him. She was on the spot, and recorded it in her memory. And because he silenced her, and abused her, and treated her as an enemy, the time is coming when she will be revenged, and publish his wickedness to the world. That man is always miserable who has a guilty conscience. "A fire not blown consumes him." Conscious guilt renders him suspicious that others know all about him, and makes him afraid of everybody. He "trembles at the shaking of a leaf." He often suspects he is known, where he is unknown. If he is in the midst of friends, the sudden appearance of a strange face disturbs him; and the thought passes through his mind, *perhaps this man knows me!* In the midst of laughter, his mirth is boisterous, or his heart is sorrowful. An equivocal remark, an incidental inquiry, a scrutinizing glance alarms him. Like the guilty monarch of Babylon, whom we read of in the Bible, surrounded by his guards and princes, and amid all the delights of music and the revelry of feasting, he is terrified by a sentence which he does not even understand.

In the time of prosperity and glee, men may still the voice of conscience, though they are actually chargeable with atrocious crimes. But when calamity overtakes them, conscience is not always so easily silenced. More than twenty years rolled away, and Joseph's brethren appear to have had no compunction for selling their own father's son as a slave to the Midianites. They had kept the secret, and no doubt thought that it would remain buried in their own breasts. But in the providence of God they were sent into Egypt themselves, and by a cluster of circumstances which they

could not foresee, they stood agitated and trembling in the presence of that very brother whom they had so wickedly sold. He knew *them*, but they did not know *him*. And conscience could no longer sleep. They looked at one another, and all seemed to have, at once, the same self-reproving thoughts. And they said unto one another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us!"

Conscience is the great betrayer of secret sin. It is one of the laws of God's government, that the apprehensions and forebodings of the mind under remorse shall, sooner or later, force the offender to the confession of his own guilt, and constrain him to be the publisher of his shame. No vigor of intellect, no strength of nerve, no sworn purpose of secrecy is able to stand out against the urgent pressure of a guilty and incensed conscience. When God commands her to speak, *she* will speak, and *speak out*, to the confusion of all the workers of iniquity. As nothing can suppress the inward complaints, so nothing can suppress the outward murmurings, of that inward condemnation which a guilty and terrified mind feels when bleeding, writhing under the agonies of an accusing conscience. You can go into no society where conscience is not one of your associates; you can enter no solitude where conscience does not follow you; conscience can make you pale on your lonely pillow; and even sleep, when it covers you with its heavy pall, does not so overpower the mind, but agitating dreams and visions creep stealthily beneath its folds, and this unwelcome messenger whispers, "Thou art the man!"

But this is not all : I remark

II. The man who practises secret sin may expect to be detected and exposed *by the providence of God.*

“Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.” That God is everywhere. He is present with all his creatures, and with every one of them at the same time. He is in all places, even the most distant, without being separated by distance, or confined by space. Go beyond the height of the heavens, he is there ; beyond the length of the earth, and the breadth of the ocean, he is there. The king’s palace, and the seaman’s cabin, alike contain him. The most lonesome as well as the most populous haunts of iniquity, the most hidden recesses and the deepest caverns of wickedness are always under his immediate inspection. Impious the thought, and vain the attempt, to fly from the face of God. Neither land, nor sea, nor earth, nor heaven, nor hell itself, has any retreat for man, where he can lurk unseen, and remain hidden from that all-seeing eye to which even the blackest darkness is not dark, and night itself is as light as day.

In a thousand ways, unknown and unsuspected by men, he can expose their sin. Strange indeed is it, that they should ever be so infatuated, as to persuade themselves that they can keep it secret when he undertakes to bring it to light. They may be politic and wise in their commission of it, while their very policy and wisdom may be so directed by his providence as to indicate the means of its discovery ; and the very plans on which they have relied for concealing it may proclaim their guilt. How often has it been verified in the history of crime, that wonted forethought and prudence so forsake the transgressor, that it would seem

as though he was determined to be his own accuser ! Studied secrecy is sometimes too artful and defeats its own designs. While men are attempting to circumvent the providence of God, they are only throwing themselves into his hands, and giving his providence the better opportunity of circumventing *them*. Man is wise, but God is wiser ; he is artful, but God is above him ; it is in vain for the artful transgressor to say, "Can he see through the dark cloud ?"

We are told in the Bible, that "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." Are they not also ever present, and ever wakeful to detect the secret transgressor ? Your eye cannot see him, your ear cannot hear him, your touch cannot feel him ; yet are you everywhere encircled with God. You cannot be so unknown, but he knows your down-setting, and your uprising, and understands your thoughts afar off. You cannot be so forgotten, but he remembers all your wickedness. It is a comfort to good and Christian men, that amid all their sorrows—sorrows unknown to the world—sorrows which they may not or cannot disclose—He who sees the sparrow and the worm, and counts the sands on the shore, sees them all. And what a discomfort to the wicked ? How withering the thought, that God sees them ; watches them ; follows hard after them ! What fearful terrors to the secret transgressor, amid sins which, it may be, neither friends nor foes have witnessed, and which no human being knows, that the great Witness and Judge sees them all ; that the next page of his providence may disclose the public record of them, and that his own

voice will rehearse them, though the recital should make every ear that hears him to tingle.

Nor is this all : I remark,

III. There are *others besides the Almighty God, who know more of the secret wickedness of men than they themselves suppose, and who are interested to tell of it.*

Men know it, and will tell of it too. Your guilty accomplice knows it ; all your guilty companions know it. Now it may be for their interest to keep it secret ; but it will not be so always. They may be sworn to secrecy ; but their oath of secrecy will be laughed at and broken when the time comes that their selfishness and pride shall be the gainer by the perjury. Your friend may know it ; but he may become your enemy. Your dearest friend may know it ; she that sleeps in your bosom ; your wife, your child may know it, and may chide you with it in a moment of inconsiderate rashness ; or may turn against you in order to protect themselves. Or they may whisper it in the closet ; or may utter it in their dreams.

There are others, besides men, who know and may declare it. There are invisible spirits everywhere about you ; spirits of good, and spirits of evil. *Evil spirits* know it, for they tempted you to commit the wickedness. They helped you to excuse it, and when you hesitated, they promised to cover it with the veil of secrecy. But the devil is not to be trusted with such secrets. He is a liar from the beginning. He is very artful in getting men into difficulty, and very faithless in getting them out of it. He only waits permission from his great Sovereign, not only to proclaim your folly, but to aggravate your shame. He at least despises you for being the victim of his devices ; and is

just mean enough to triumph over you when you have fallen. He is your greatest enemy, and would cover you with confusion. He is quite familiar with scenes of wickedness. He notes and marks them, and visits them to see who is there, and to offer his counsel, and lend a helping hand in all their iniquity. And, believe me, no sooner do they become the victims of his subtlety, than he glories in it, and boasts himself that they were taken captive by him at his will.

There are good spirits, too, everywhere hovering around men. These winged messengers of heavenly mercy, are ever and anon fulfilling their errands of love; and never more opportunely than by warning the tempted of their danger, and suggesting those more virtuous resolutions which may break the snare of the Evil One. Through their watchful ministrations, many a dark and dreary path is changed as though by magic, and becomes radiant with light and beauty. Though unseen by you, they saw the sin you vainly hoped to conceal. They stood near you, and entreated you, with silent and matchless eloquence, not to touch "that abominable thing which God's soul hateth." They came down from heaven on purpose to resist the seduction of those foul spirits that were tempting you. They could have foiled the adversary but for you; but you would not listen to them. And when you committed that deed of wickedness, they noted it down. They were grieved that you committed it, and wondered at your presumption. And they have preserved it in long remembrance, and are witnesses against you. You would not be diverted from your purpose; and now these holy and angelic ones stand ready, when

your trial comes on, to bear witness against you. I remark also,

IV. In the fourth place, there is still another witness to your folly, though the time for his testimony is not yet arrived: I mean *the great Revealer, Death*.

He, too, is everywhere about your path and about your bed. Wherever there is life, there is Death. He is in the sea, as well as on the land; with his gigantic strides he compasses the wide circumference of this inhabited globe. The utmost extent of human skill, and vigilance, and vigor, cannot resist his power. He is in the whirlwind and in the gentle breeze. He watches aloft, and he sits below on the foaming billow. He comes on the burning rays of the meridian sun, and in the tranquil moonlight. He is imbodyed in the atmosphere. He is borne along throughout the unruffled voyage of human existence, and lurks unseen on many a lee shore. Wherever we move, and to whatever point we direct our steps, in every place, and time, and circumstance, he is there. Men do not move hand or foot, but he observes them; nor form a passing thought which he does not see, nor speak so much as a single profane word which he does not hear.

How terrible the thought to a wicked man, that Death is so near him,—just waiting for the patience of God to come to an end, in order to strike the blow! The thoughtless sailor braves the storms and perils of the ocean, and fetches at last the circumference of the globe, and comes home, and finds that he has been sailing round this little ball of earth only to die. Or perhaps he sleeps where the sea-weed grows, and the sea-monsters nurse their young ones, and the coral rock is anchored—where heroes sleep, and navies are forgotten.

This is no illusion. Death's grim form stalks alike amid the frequented and the solitary abodes of men. His spectre hovered there over those scenes of almost forgotten wickedness. His ghastly eye was there; on his ear fell that soft whisper, those still, and almost sepulchral breathings, that were not meant for mortal man to hear. All-pervading, unrelenting Death, will reveal that unknown wickedness. Nothing shall have power to silence his testimony. He shall come into your windows on the land, or stand by your hammock on the sea; he shall have a place near that bed of languishing, and there recount your crimes, find out your sin, and fill you with his reproaches.

I have but one more, and

V. A fifth remark, which is, that after death, *there is a judgment.*

This is heaven's high and unchangeable decree. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness." We do not know when that Day will come; and only know that then every man must give an account of himself unto God. The morning of that Day shall break on this slumbering world when men think little of its coming. The graves shall be opened; the sea shall give up her dead; men and angels—all, all shall appear at the judgment seat of Christ.

Who shall say, that Day is not near to *him*? There is amazing emphasis in those few words, "*after death, the judgment!*" The hour seems indeed far distant; but it will be as soon as time, with his eagle wings shall have finished his short career on earth. Intervening ages pass rapidly over those who sleep in the dust, and in the caverns of the great deep. There is no dial plate there, on which to count the hours of time. No

longer is it told by days, or months, or years, nor by observation of the heavenly bodies; for the planets which mark these periods are hidden from their sight. Its flight is no longer noted by events perceived by the senses; for the ear is deaf, and the eye is closed. The busy world of life which wakes at each morning, and ceases at every night, goes on above them; but to them all is silent and unseen. The greetings of joy and the voice of grief, the revolution of empires and the lapse of ages, send no sound within that narrow cell. Generation after generation are brought and laid by their side; the monumental marble tells the centuries that have passed away; but to the sleeping dead the long interval is unobserved. Like a dream of the night, when, with the quickness of thought, the mind ranges time and place almost without a limit, there is but a moment between the hour when the eye is closed in the grave, and when it wakes to the judgment.

We sicken over the sins of men, and sometimes wonder why they are not *always* found out in the present world. But at that Day everything will be revealed just as it is. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God." The Son of Man shall come with power and great glory, and "before him shall stand all nations." Sovereigns and slaves shall be there. Rich and poor, young and old, male and female, seamen and landmen, shall be there. Deeds of solitary and associated wickedness shall then stand forth; long forgotten deeds shall then be remembered; deeds till then unknown shall be disclosed. Deeds committed under the veil of night shall then be set in the light of God's countenance. Deeds done in foreign lands, or in

the islands of the sea, and far away from human eyes, shall no longer lose their atrocity in the distance of place, time, or retirement ; but every ear shall hear of them.

The sentence of men will be of little moment then, compared with the judgment of God. Yet will his judgment be sanctioned, justified, honored by the unanimous voice of all the universe. And what is never to be lost sight of by the man who would fain cover up his wickedness, the magnificent scenes of that Day, and all its solemn splendor, impressive and affecting as they will be, will be lost sight of in the more impressive and affecting developments of the character and conduct of men. God will do justice to the secret transgressor then ; and the secret transgressor will be forced to do justice to himself. His history shall no longer be secret ; nor shall he ever again ask the question, "*Will it ever be known ?*" The truth will then never be forgotten, and the sentence will eternally vibrate on his ear, "Be sure your sin will find you out !"

SERMON VII.

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE.

MARK xvi. 16. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

THE offer of the Gospel is not a *mere* offer, which men may receive or reject at their pleasure. It is an *authoritative* offer, and one which they are *commanded* to receive, and cannot reject with impunity. *Rebello*us man is invited to return to his allegiance to the God of Heaven; and if he does so, he has the promise of pardon and life. But if he refuses to do so, it is at his peril. It is a princely offer, which may not be trifled with. Our Lord Jesus, after he had been “delivered for our offences, and raised for our justification,” came to his disciples, and said, “All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me. Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.”

These are gracious words, yet are they fearful words. A great and solemn alternative is this—life or death, heaven or hell! Let us dwell upon both the parts of it; for we have an interest in it momentous as eternity.

I. In the first place, he that believeth shall be saved.

Mark the precision of the language. It is one of the most definite and comprehensive sentences in the Bible.

It instructs us who of all the fallen race of man will be saved. And who are they? A vile and blood-shedding king, like Manasseh, might say, *I can never hope to be saved; for I have filled the world with the bodies of the slain, and have waded to the throne through rivers of blood.* A relentless persecutor, like Saul of Tarsus, might say, *There is no salvation for me; for I have kindled the fires, and erected the gibbet, for thousands of the people of God.* The hardened sailor may say, *It is of no use for me to think of being saved; for my heart is hard as adamant; I am a profane swearer, a thoughtless Sabbath-breaker, and have from my youth up been a despiser and reviler of God and his Christ.* But what saith the Scripture to all such men? Its language is simple and strong; this is what it says—*“He that believeth shall be saved.”* Not a few there are who feel that they are not good enough to be partakers of this great salvation; and that if they were only better men, and more holy and righteous, they would stand a better chance of finding mercy. But Jesus Christ says no such thing. He declares that the man who *believes in him*, no matter who, nor where, nor what he is, shall be a saved man. Not a few there are who would persuade us that no man can enter into the kingdom of God, unless they belong to some one particular denomination of Christians. But if this were so, the language of Christ would have been very different from what it is in the text. He would have told us what sect and which clan we must belong to. But he simply says, that we must be Christians, and believers in his blessed Gospel.

A sweet and delightful truth this, that *“he that believeth shall be saved.”* No man may take anything

from it, nor add to it anything. There it stands single and alone, the only, the divine charter of the sinner's hopes. It is like the peering out of the north-star when the bewildered mariner has lost his compass; it is like the blue sky just opening over his head in the midst of a long storm.

But you ask me, *what is it to believe the Gospel?* The question is a proper one, because there is a false faith as well as a true. False faith is holding the truths of the Gospel in unrighteousness; it is the belief of the head, without the belief of the heart; it is believing that the Son of God came into the world to save sinners, without loving him; it is such a faith as the devils have. True faith is humbly receiving Jesus Christ as your teacher, your Lord, and your Saviour; giving yourself to him, and trusting in him alone for salvation. Some things we believe on the evidence of our senses; some on the testimony of our fellow-men; but the Gospel is received on the testimony of God. If we receive the testimony of man, the testimony of God is greater. "This is the testimony of God; that he hath given us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son." There is salvation in no other; he is mighty to save; those who come to him he will in no wise cast out. These are great and precious truths; faith receives them, obeys them, lives upon them. Humbling as they are to his pride and self-righteousness, the believing sinner rejoices in them, and chooses to be saved in the way by which he is humbled and God exalted.

The Saviour's declaration is, "He that believeth *shall be saved.*" He shall be *saved.* What is it to be *saved?* The salvation here spoken of is indeed a great salvation—a salvation which will require ages to un-

fold. Pardon, peace, holiness, adoption into God's family, and his divine love, his fatherly care and discipline; a safe and happy death, and blessed and glorious resurrection; and an eternal heaven, the dwelling-place of everlasting peace and joy, where every cloud shall be withdrawn, every sin eradicated, every fear subside, and every hope realized—this is the *salvation* which belongs to him that believeth. It is not of his deserving, but of God's mercy; it is not of his working, but of Christ's dying. God's word for it, "he that believeth shall be saved." Christ's death stands in the place of his death, and he shall be saved. God is not "a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." "Once have I sworn in my holiness," saith Jehovah, "that I will not lie unto David."

But we turn from this delightful truth to contemplate the other part of this solemn alternative.

II. In the second place, our text declares, *He that believeth not shall be damned.*

"Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." There are fearful terrors revealed in the Bible, and we must preach them. The one are as important to be made known as the other. Neither the promises, nor the threatenings of the Gospel, have any appropriate force and import, unless both are true. We dare not neglect to preach them both as we shall answer it at the bar of God.

The Saviour declares of every one who does not believe the Gospel, that he shall be *damned*. He does not use any softer language than this; he says he shall be *damned*. To the king on the throne, and to the criminal in the prison-house; to the minister in the pulpit, and to the poorest and meanest of his hearers; to the

titled and the untitled, to the honored and the dishonored, to the moral and the immoral, to the sanctimonious professor of godliness and to the gay worldling, to seamen and to landsmen, he says, "He that believeth not shall be *damned*!"

How many individuals, and what large classes of men does this comprehensive declaration involve! How many who expected to be saved because they were the children of pious parents, will at last perish because they did not believe the Gospel! How many who expected to be saved because they were better than other men, will perish because they did not believe the Gospel! How many who thought that God was too good to damn them, will be damned after all, because they did not believe! How many who expected to be saved because Christ died for their salvation, will nevertheless be damned, because they would not come to him that they might have life! How many who have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; how many who have been the partakers of that broken bread and that cup of blessing which show forth his death, will be damned because they did not believe in that Saviour whom this outward observance honors!

Unbelief is the opposite of belief. If believing the Gospel is heartily receiving and obeying it, then *not believing* is heartily *rejecting* and disobeying it. "Did ye never read in the Scriptures, the stone which the builders *rejected*, the same is become the head of the the corner?" Unbelief is not a mere negative act of the mind; it is a positive act. It is not simply the *not doing* that which God commands; but *the doing* of that which he forbids. Those who do not believe the

Gospel reject and oppose all the truth, and grace, and heaven which that Gospel reveals. They are the personal enemies of God and his Christ. They are displeased with the method of redemption; they do not like the terms of it, and will not accept it on any terms. They had rather "have their sins, and go to hell; than leave their sins, and go to heaven."

Now Jesus Christ says of all such persons, that they shall be *damned*. God is angry with such persons, and he will show the greatness and power of his anger by damning them. This is just what their incorrigible unbelief deserves. When men have made up their minds finally and irrevocably to reject the salvation God offers them, they have fitted themselves for just such a doom. They are "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction." Their enmity to God and their rejection of his Son fits them for nothing else. There is everything to require the execution of this fearful curse, and there is nothing in the universe to prevent it. God requires it; his law requires it; his Gospel requires it; heaven, earth, and hell require it. And as there is nothing to forbid it, so there is nothing to prevent it. Justice will not, goodness will not, mercy will not—it *cannot*, for its tenderest entreaties are despised. "How can they escape, who neglect so great salvation?" There is no escape—there is no hope—no, never! "He that believeth not shall be *damned*!"

And what is it to be *damned*? I tremble while I ask this question. God grant that none of us may ever know what it is! That banishment from God and heaven—that everlasting destruction—that dreadful, eternal hell—may we never know what it is! The Bible kindly gives us a glimpse of it, but no words can

fully reveal what it is. There is the utter darkness ; there is the lake of fire ; there is the furnace of Almighty wrath ; there are weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth ; there the worm does not die, and the fire is never quenched. Who among us can dwell with devouring fire ? who among us can inhabit everlasting burnings ?

Unutterable truth, he that "believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned!" Both parts of this great alternative are equally true. The Bible furnishes the same evidence that unbelievers will be damned, as that believers will be saved. The promise and the threatening, in the text, were uttered by the same lips, and will both be fulfilled by the same Almighty power. Believers, when they die, go to heaven ; unbelievers, when they die, go to hell. In heaven there is "an house not made with hands, a building of God," a holy and immortal Paradise. And there is a hell, deep and large, a world of everlasting gloom and terrors, where suffering is but the earnest of suffering, sighing the prelude to sighing that shall never end.

One of these worlds, beloved friends, will be your everlasting dwelling-place. There is no middle state, because there is no middle character between believing and rejecting the Gospel. There is no neutrality in the business of religion. You must be either the friend of God, or his enemy ; you must either believe the Gospel, and be saved, or refuse to believe it, and be lost. No matter what else you do, if you do not believe the Gospel, you must perish. You may not be so bad as thousands of others ; but if you reject this salvation, this is enough to condemn you. There is a great dif-

ference between those who receive the truth of the Gospel in the love of it, and those who reject it. It will be an everlasting difference; nothing but heaven and hell will ever show how great the difference is.

In view of these things, and in the name of the ascended Saviour, we make you the offer of this salvation. We call to you to accept it for yourselves. It is yours now only in offer; it will become actually yours in possession, when you have laid hold upon it by faith. You may have it for the taking. One and all of you, shall have it for the taking; and it is because you do not choose to take it, if it do not indeed belong to you. You are welcome to it, much and long as you may have trodden it under your feet. All its treasures are open to you; and you may come even now and receive its pardon and its holiness, and share in all the spoils that have been won by the Captain of this salvation.

Away then with this indifference, this doubt, this delay, these excuses; and come, take the water of life freely. It is but one point you are called on to decide, and that is to take or refuse—to *believe and be saved*, or to *disbelieve and be damned*! This is the issue; it is not of our forming, but God's; it is to the decision of this single question that you are shut up, and on that decision hangs your eternity.

What shall your decision be? Believe and be saved, or disbelieve and be damned—which will you choose? Will you be so foolish, and prove yourself so wicked, so desperately wicked, as to reject these offers of mercy? Can you abide the consequences of such a decision? Have you made up your mind to them, and for them? Is your love of sinning so strong, that there is a voice within you that says, "I have loved idols,

and after idols I will go," be the consequences what they may? Come death, come hell, come what may, one thing I will never do, and that is, give up my sins and return to God through Jesus Christ.

Ah, my bold hearer, is it this that you have come to? Will you contend with God? Can thine heart endure, and can thine hands be strong, in the day when he shall deal with thee? Foolish men, when will ye be wise! There is a better destiny for you than this hopeless, this ruinous conflict, with your Maker. Come, sinner, to him who came to seek and save that which was lost. He will not cast you out, bold, and desperate, and hopeless a sinner as you may have been. He will pity, he will pardon, he will save. He will care for you when the mountains shake, and the waters roar and are troubled. When earth and sea, in mingled burning, are consumed over your head, he will think of you, and raise you up at the Last Day.

SERMON VIII.

FEAR RELIEVED BY TRUST IN GOD.

PSALM LXVI. 3. At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

FEAR is that dread and horror of mind which arises from the apprehension of danger. It is often attended with anxiety and solicitude ; and sometimes with a dejection and melancholy which unfit men for those duties which seasons of danger demand.

A man may not be chargeable with superstition, merely because he has many painful remembrances of the past, or some melancholy forebodings of the future. They are not *phantoms* of horror, which make a wise man anxious for his personal safety. Idle fears outweigh the sober judgment, tyrannize over the imagination, and beset the path of life with evils which do not exist. They are *real* evils, which are to be feared ; and one of the great preservatives from them, is to be afraid of them. Yet such fears are ever among the great disturbers of human tranquillity ; and though there is no perfect security from them, it is a question of interest, if they may not be alleviated and relieved.

In answer to this question, we have the experience of one who had been familiar with the dangers of the camp, and the field of battle, and the still more formidable dangers of the throne. He was a man of sober reflection and great firmness ; too active and resolute,

ever to be panic-struck, or impressed with false terrors; yet too wide awake to the dangers to which he was exposed, not to have sought a timely and effective relief even from *fear*. He was, moreover, under the guidance of the Spirit of God; and the truth he utters in the text is therefore one of those universal truths, which are alike adapted to all men, in all employments, and in all ages of the world. The answer he gives to this question is, "At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." His fears were alleviated by his *trust in God*. Peace instead of perturbation, safety instead of danger, strength, confidence, and courage, instead of weakness, suspicion, and fear, were, with this holy man, the result of *trusting in God*.

I. Let us direct our thoughts, in the first place, to *the constituent elements of this state of mind, and show what it is to trust in God*.

There are natural elements of character which render men fearless. There are also employments and habits of life in which some persons are so accustomed to danger, that they scarcely know the strong emotions of fear. High stimulus and strong internal excitement often make men courageous. Anger, and revenge, and the absorbing love of gold, not unfrequently so engross the mind; that it is heedless of danger, and rushes upon it as the horse rusheth into the battle, or the reckless soldier faces the mouth of the cannon. A keen sensitiveness to reproach, or a chivalric pride, or a morbid and false sense of honor, lead some to court scenes of danger, and with a fool-hardy bravado, expose and throw away human life; when true courage would have been fearless of the obloquy, and a stainless honor

would have shielded the sacred deposits which it had no right to throw away, or expose.

But this is a fearlessness which has no alliance with the tranquil state of mind spoken of in our text. There are *moral* elements in this state of mind, which distinguish it from natural fortitude, and from mere animal, or even intellectual courage, and which give it steadiness and vigor, as well as patience and perseverance, which are found only in the man who trusts in God.

Nowhere is there the broad basis for confidence—intelligent and enduring confidence—tranquil and joyful confidence, save in the character, care, wisdom, goodness, and power of that great and gracious Being, who is “God over all, blessed forever.” God must be known, his favor must be secured, his presence felt and enjoyed; else the changes we pass through, the trials we feel, and the evils which threaten us, will disturb our quietude. “The Lord liveth, and blessed be *my Rock*, and let the God of my salvation be exalted,”—this is the true expression of a trusting confidence. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,”—this is the confidence which gives peace. “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and what is there on the earth that I desire beside thee?”—this is the trust in which the soul rises above every fear. Instead of being the enemy of God, such a man is his friend; instead of fleeing *from* God, such a man flees *to* him, and trusts in him. There is a confidence in the will, and way, and wisdom of God, which leads us to prefer his will to our own, to commit our way to him, and to seek and learn wisdom by sitting at his feet. And it is just in the measure in which these things are seen and felt,

that we see and feel that there is no just and solid ground for confidence anywhere except in God.

There is one thing that never fails to weaken trust in God: I mean *disobedience* to his commands. A guilty conscience and a tranquil state of mind cannot exist together in the same bosom. Disobedience always opens the door to doubt and fear. It brings the soul into bondage and terror. It always did, and always will weaken confidence in God. It did in the fallen angels; it made them fear and tremble. So, when our first parents committed their first sin, their own minds were filled with suspicion and distrust. They ran away from God and "hid themselves among the trees of the garden." And we all know from our own experience, that the more we sin against God, the more we are plunged into the same wakeful jealousy. Guilt is never confiding, and always suspicious. It poisons all the sources of confidence. "Who is he that will harm you, *if ye be followers of that which is good?*" It is only then, that men trust in God to keep them. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, into which the *righteous* runneth and is safe."

Yet all these things are but preliminaries to the *act itself* of trusting in God. That act consists in the *exercise of faith in God's goodness, and power to protect you*. A trusting heart is the very opposite of a distrustful and unbelieving heart. It never gives way to an overweening anxiety and solicitude. It does not yield to dejection. Whenever it is exercised, the soul is supported and comforted by a view of the fulness, all-sufficiency, and presence of God. It trusts the providence of God; it trusts his word; it trusts in the grace in Jesus Christ. It fears nothing; it sees nothing to be afraid

of, because God is its "refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." "Fear not them," says the Saviour, "that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but fear him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." The fear of God casts out every other fear. "He that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep; the Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand." "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou Lord makest me to dwell in safety."

There are "exceeding great and precious promises" to those who thus trust in God. "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that *trusteth in the Lord*, mercy shall compass him about." "The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants, and none of them that *trust in him* shall be desolate." Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust; surely he shall not be moved forever. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his *heart is fixed trusting in the Lord*." They that "trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abideth forever." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

Precious indeed are such declarations. "Oh how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee: which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" Thou shalt "keep them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." It is a privilege the world cannot give, thus to hide ourselves within these chambers of his protecting power and love. From his own high and holy habitation he says to us, "Come,

my people, enter thou into thy chambers ; and shut thy doors about thee ; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast."

With this brief view of what it is to trust in God, we proceed,

II. To show, in the second place, *when* we should trust in God, and on what occasions our confidence in him is specially called for.

Our confidence should be just as extensive as our fears, or our occasions for fear. "At what time *I am afraid*, I will trust in thee !"

There are two general sources of fear with all men ; they are afraid on account of others, and they are afraid on their own account. And at what time they are afraid, either for themselves, or others, they may trust in God.

1. They may trust in God at those seasons when they are afraid *on account of others*. We are more apt to be afraid for others, than we are for ourselves. The parent is alarmed for the safety of his child ; the husband is alarmed for the safety of his wife, or the wife for her far distant husband ; and at what time they are afraid, they ought to trust in God. The Christian statesman trembles for his country ; and after he has done all he can for her security, should implore for her the protection of the God of nations, and quietly leave her in his hands. Every good man sees causes of apprehension in the condition of vital piety, and often trembles for the ark of God. But he ought to have confidence in God that he will take care of his Church. "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved ; God shall help her, and that right early." "No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper. Dominion is with

him; and though the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing," his "counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." Do we fear for this apostate and dying world, with all its guilt and woe; we may trust in God that he will fill it with his glory. Do we fear for the spiritual interests of those we most love; do we see them dead in sin, and after all that we have done, and all that has been by others to turn them from the error of their ways, does our courage wither and our hearts sink and die within us; we may hope in God for them still. As the clay is in the potter's hands so are they in his hands; nor is the most hopeless of them all beyond the reach of his sovereign and abounding grace. We naturally fear for persons and interests that are dear to us; sometimes they are great interests, and we feel deep solicitude for them; but our solicitude and fears may always be relieved by committing them to God's care, and trusting them with him. It would be a hopeless resort, if we had none but created helpers to go to for them; if we must "put our trust in princes, and in the son of man in whom there is no help;" but if God is a refuge for us, and we can, and do trust in him, we may bid our solicitude be gone, and give our fears to the winds.

2. In the second place, at those seasons when our fears are excited on our *own account*, we may also trust in God. Every Christian man has direct and confidential transactions with the God of Heaven, in relation to everything which concerns his well-being for the life that now is, and that which is to come. All that he is, and all that he has for both worlds is committed to his hands, to whom he daily looks up and says, "My *Father*, who art in heaven!" This is the sheet-anchor of

his hopes ; he has no need to fear for body, or for soul, nor does he fear, so long as he trusts in God.

Of all the causes of fear to which man is subjected, those are the most serious which relate to his spiritual well-being. It is no marvel, that a man who is by nature "dead in trespasses and sins," should have a painful sense of his lost condition. He sees that he is justly condemned by the law of God, and that the punishment to which he is exposed is everlasting destruction of body and soul in hell. He knows not that he shall live another day, or another hour. And he trembles at the thought of enduring the wrath of God in that world where the "worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." He does not know but his present convictions of sin and danger may all forsake him, and that the Spirit of God, which does not always strive with man, may abandon him to more than his former obduracy. He sees that he can do nothing to recommend himself to God, and that he has no excuse for not repenting and believing the Gospel. He may be listening to the last calls of the divine mercy, and like hundreds and thousands of others, tremble lest, "after all, he should be a castaway." Now these affecting apprehensions are always relieved when such persons are brought to *trust in God*, and commit themselves to him, on the infinite merits of the great redemption. When the weary and heavy-laden sinner goes for rest to Jesus Christ, he is no longer like the troubled sea, but finds rest to his soul.

There are seasons, too, when after he has made his peace with God, he has great fears on account of his remaining sins. He feels the bondage of sin still ; "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the

flesh ;" he is assailed by the powers of darkness, and is called to encounter the solicitations and the frowns of a world that lieth in wickedness. And his only refuge is *to trust in God*. He himself is a poor unworthy sinner—poor, blind, miserable sinner. He must go out of himself to One whose "grace is sufficient for him." He has a heart "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and when he trusts in God who knows his wants, who requires him to trust in him, who has all power and grace, who has ever been gracious to those who have trusted in him, and who has promised to be so still—his discouragement ceases, his fears subside. Though he is perfect weakness, if he has Omnipotence to rest upon, his resources are infinite.

There are seasons too, when, as he goes on his way, he cannot always rejoice as he goes. He mourns the hidings of God's face, and he fears that he has a "name that he liveth and is dead." The spirit of adoption is not always given to him, and he cannot say with boldness, "Abba, Father!" Yet does that spirit always return, and his consolations are made to abound by Jesus Christ, when he can cast himself upon Omnipotent love and mercy, and say, "Though he slay me, yet will I *trust* in him!"

There are *temporal* evils, too, the apprehension of which is relieved only by trust in God. Trials may be appointed to us; poverty may stare us in the face; enemies may beset our path, and we may tremble at their resentment and rage. The rod of God may be upon our habitations, and he may "bend his bow, and set us as a mark for the arrow." Difficulties and dangers may lie across the path of duty, and we may be called to sacrifices and toil, from which we reluctant.

Yet is trust in God a sovereign remedy for all these evils. We are safe when they are close upon us; and even when they are only apprehended, and they exist only in our own alarmed minds, we are "quiet from the *fear* of evil." He that "dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my Rock; my God, in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday."

Not a few are "all their lifetime subject to bondage, through the fear of death." It is, indeed, a solemn thing to die. None of us can tell how fearful the struggle is with this "last enemy." Go to that chamber of mourning. See that pallid, lifeless form, once glowing with animation and beauty, but now motionless, cold as marble, and already beginning to be a loathsome, putrescent carcass. This is *death*. Descend into yonder cemetery; walk around it, and listen while these once-living men seem to "say to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister." This is *death*. Yet men are exposed to it every day, every hour, every moment. Our lives are forfeited to justice; and no living man can tell how soon the penalty, in his own case, may be executed. A very little matter, the slightest circumstance in the world, may call us from time to eternity. A loosened bolt or nail, a breaking rope, a mistaken and heedless step, a single wave, and no human power or skill can

save us. Our companions and friends, alas! how many of them have passed from the land of the living, and sunk into the bosom of the treacherous deep! Many a stately merchantman, and still more gallant warrior of the seas, have gone down in a moment, and carried with them brave and noble hearts, over whom the old ocean rolls, and whose funeral dirge is sung only by the moaning, howling winds. We cannot always anticipate the dying strife, the desperate struggle, with composure. Courage, sailors! "At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee!" It is a fierce foe you have to grapple with; but to those who trust in God, he is a vanquished foe—vanquished on the cross. We look not on death alone, but on him who "has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light." Sin "hath reigned unto death; but grace reigns unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, our Lord." Those who trust in God die but once. Death is their "last enemy." Pain invades their couch no more. Grievs and fears no more oppress them.

" Their languishing head is at rest,
Its thinking and aching are o'er;
That quiet, immovable breast
Is heaved by affliction no more."

Shame on the seaman who has no confidence in God! He may not give dying grace for a living hour; yet as "thy day is, so shall thy strength be." *Trust him.* And then when you come to the dark valley, it shall be illumined by the light of his countenance.

What losers are they who cast away their confidence in God! Whence is it that you cannot feel safe in the hands of God? O lift up your eyes beyond the

everlasting hills and the foaming ocean, whence cometh your help. Fear God, and love his Son. Then you will be safe and happy. That brooding anxiety will pass away. It is no mystery that you sometimes find yourselves friendless and forlorn, if you have no trust in God.

"How are thy servants blessed, O Lord,
How sure is their defence!
Eternal wisdom is their guide,
Their help Omnipotence.

"In foreign realms, and lands remote,
Supported by thy care,
Through burning climes they pass unhurt,
And breathe in tainted air.

"When by the dreadful tempest borne,
High on the broken wave,
They know thou art not slow to hear,
Nor impotent to save.

"In 'midst of danger, fear, and death,
Thy goodness we'll adore;
We'll praise thee for thy mercies past,
And humbly hope for more.

"Our life, while thou preserv'st that life,
Thy sacrifice shall be;
And death, when death shall be our lot,
Shall give our souls to thee."

SERMON IX

THE TERMS OF DISCIPLESHIP.

MATTHEW XVI. 24. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

MANY a man thinks he is a Christian, who is not so ; it is, therefore, important to understand what it is to be a Christian. Many a man persuades himself that he is willing to become a Christian, and would at once become one if he only knew how. Now the declaration of Christ in the text exactly meets this state of mind. It is a most beautiful passage, and so full of instruction, that if, by God's favor, I can only spread it out before you, and rightly explain it, it can hardly fail to be profitable to you. If any man wishes to become a disciple of Christ, it teaches him what he must do. He must deny himself—take up his cross—and follow him. These three things he must do, or he can never become a Christian.

It is not every man who wishes to be a Christian. The great mass of men do not desire any such thing. Many do not think enough about it, to desire it ; while very many who have thought, and do think a great deal about it, had rather not be Christians. They do not want the trouble, and anxiety, and responsibility ; but greatly prefer to live on as they are. They do not

wish to be singular ; but choose rather the broad way with the multitude, than the straight and narrow way with the few.

But there are those who are so convinced of the truth and importance of religion, that they desire to possess it. They have lost the interest in the things of this world which they once felt. They have no relish for its pleasures, and scarcely any heart left for its ordinary occupations. They are unhappy, and feel that they need something which this world cannot give them. Little as they once thought of Christ and religion, they have different views now, and wish to be Christians, and desire to become the true disciples of Jesus Christ.

Nor is this a vain and unmeaning desire. They wish to be instructed in the school of Christ, and to belong to his family. They wish to enlist under him as their Leader, in the conflict they are entering upon with sin and the world ; to sign the articles of the engagement by which they bind themselves to him as their great Captain and Commander over the perilous voyage of human life. They do not wish to be Christians in name only, but in reality. They sincerely desire to consecrate themselves to Christ, and to be devoted to him in body, soul, and spirit. Just as some men desire to be learned, and others to be rich ; just as one desires to be a merchant, another a mechanic, another a seaman ; so those of whom we are speaking desire to be Christians. They desire above all things to be Christians ; they never expect to be happy until they become Christians ; they do not look in any way to better their condition, until they become Christians.

Are any of you, my friends, sensible of having such

a desire? If it be so, give God the praise. A desire like this does not belong to low, earth-born desires. It does not originate in our corrupt nature; it does not take its rise in any worldly considerations. Fashion does not originate it; convenience does not originate it; no considerations of worldly interest, honors, or fame, give rise to it. When men desire to become Christians from such considerations as these, their desire is short-lived, feeble, spurious, and fails of its object. No, it is from no such sources as these. "It is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The desire to be a Christian is a very deep and strong desire, where it is found in the soul at all. It is above every other desire, and is not slow to show itself in ways that prove its true and deep sincerity.

It has been already observed, that, if a man truly wishes to be a Christian, there are three things which he must do:—he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Christ.

I. In the first place, he must *deny himself*. It is one of the mournful consequences of the apostasy of our race from God, that by it man became a supremely selfish being. Nor is there any one trait of human wickedness, all the world over, so strong as this. Men think of themselves, love themselves, live for themselves. They usurp the rights of the Godhead, substitute self in the place of God, and make themselves their Deity.

But if a man would become a Christian, this selfish spirit must be denied. God must no longer be dethroned from his heart, and the idol self set up in his place; self must be dethroned—self-righteousness, self-reliance, self-advancement, self in all its forms, and in

every form where it comes in collision with God's claims,—and the first and best affections must be given to God, and he alone must have the throne within the heart. Those rights of God, of which he has been so sacrilegiously despoiled, must be restored. The strong and long-continued selfish habits of the soul must be subdued. They must be subdued in principle, and brought to that self-abasement and that disclaimer of personal claims and personal righteousness which magnifies the grace of God, and the righteousness of his Son. And they must be subdued in practice, and the self-denial which the Gospel enjoins, carried along in the actings of an every-day Christianity, and giving evidence that it belongs to the religion of the Bible to “put off the old man with his lusts, and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.” That man's religion who is not thus clad in humble robes, and whose distinctive livery is not a self-denying heart and life is vain. The first thing which he must do, if he would be a Christian indeed, is to deny himself.

II. The second is, *to take up his cross*. If he would think, and feel, and speak, and act like a Christian, he will have enemies to encounter, obstacles to surmount, and trials to endure, that are neither few nor small. He must come out from a world that lieth in wickedness; make the people of God his chosen companions, enter upon the path that is trodden by the few, and bear shame and reproach for the sake of Christ. The church of God is not yet a triumphant, but a militant community, opposed and opposing till its contests become victories.

The cross is the emblem of hope—sweet emblem; it is glad tidings of great joy to all people. But it is also

the emblem of ignominy and suffering. It was so to the Saviour, it is so to his disciples. To a greater or less degree, they endure reproach and suffering, for being Christians. And in whatever form these come upon them on this account, this is their cross. This is the true idea of the cross as it is borne by Christians. It is a cross to stand almost alone as the friends of Christ and his Gospel in this fault-finding world. It is a cross to bear testimony against evil men and evil times, and faithfully to oppose the swollen current of evil example and influences. It is a cross to withstand vain and fashionable customs and usages, to contend with error and false religion, and stiff and bigoted formalism. It is a cross to be censured because we are singular, and to feel constrained to impose restraints upon an intercourse with those we love, because they endanger our piety. It is a cross, not only to contend with our spiritual enemies, but to turn our back upon them, to run away like cowards, because we are more afraid of ourselves than of them.

Nor is this all. The Christian may often be called to suffer in other ways, and for his faith and a good conscience. He may not have access to offices of emolument, honor and trust, merely because he is a Christian. Like Christians of other times, he may suffer the "spoiling of his goods" for his religion, and be treated as the offscouring of the earth for the sake of Christ. He may be dragged before human tribunals, cast into prisons, be exposed to the fury of wicked men, and called to die for the faith and name he will in no wise renounce. In enduring these, or any of these, for Christ's sake, the Christian takes up the cross. There is a cross for him to take up; he must suffer be-

cause he is a Christian, and "will live godly in Christ Jesus." Those who have no cross to bear, may well be afraid that they have little, or none of the religion of Christ. If we were such Christians as Paul, and Peter, and John, the world would take knowledge of us that we had been with Jesus; "the meanest servants in the hall of Caiaphas would discover our true character; our speech would betray us." If we would not deny our Maker at any price, we should be made to feel the consequences of our unflinching fidelity. This is a cross we shall take up if we would be Christ's disciples. We may be called Christians, and have no cross to take up. We may side now with Christ, and now with the world; with a trembling servility to men we may hail from both sides, and have no cross to bear. But who wishes to be such a Christian as this; or to have anything to do with this bastard Christianity? No; if any man will be Christ's disciple, he must take up his cross, and follow his Divine Master.

III. And this is the third thing: he *must follow the Saviour*. To such Christ is revealed in the threefold character of Teacher, Saviour, and Lord. The man who would fain become a Christian is a benighted man; he has a darkened understanding and an erring conscience. He needs a guide; and there is but one that he can safely follow; and he it is who is the "light of the world" and the "life of men." He must seek his teaching, and follow it, or he cannot be his disciple. His first and his last lesson must be learned of Christ. His business is implicitly to follow Christ's instructions. He will never be a Christian, if he does not meekly receive the ingrafted word, which is able to make him wise to salvation.

Nor is it as his Teacher only that he must follow Christ, but as his Saviour. He is a sinner ; and nothing but the blood of Christ can wash away his sins, remove his fears, and give him pardon and peace with God. Perplexity, remorse, and terror, will be the portion of the soul that looks not to this great Sacrifice, and confides not in this great Atoning and interceding High Priest. It is a bloody path that we must tread, if we would follow Christ ; but it is marked by his blood, and not our own. The blood of sprinkling is the true token of the way ; follow it ; trace it up to the cross.

It is equally true, that whoever would be a Christian, must follow Christ as his Lord and King. When you once know his will, never question its rectitude, or wisdom, just follow it. What he requires, perform ; avoid what he forbids. When he speaks, be still. Ask no questions, where he has decided. Never hesitate, when he has once spoken. His is to command, yours to obey. The Christianity that does not do his will, neither believes his doctrines, nor trusts his grace. "All power is given to him in heaven and in earth ;" but it is to govern, as well as save. When he calls, say to him, "speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth !" Follow wherever he leads the way. It is safe to walk in his footsteps. You will not indeed ever reach the high standard of his example ; but this is the only standard that truly exemplifies the religion of the Gospel, and at which you must aim. In all dubious questions of moral conduct, it is always a safe question to propose to ourselves, *How did Christ act ? and how would he conduct himself in my circumstances and responsibilities ?* No other example is worthy, in all respects, of

being always imitated. Every grace, every virtue, in its highest perfection and untarnished beauty and loveliness, may be learned from him.

Once more, let us repeat the comprehensive instruction of the text. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Have you no desire to be Christians? Ye sons of the ocean, tell me, are not ye willing to be the disciples of Christ? Is it the drudgery of this world only that you love; is it enough for you to toil, and suffer, and die in the pursuit of things that are seen? Are you dead to every other call, but the call of Christ? Are you awake, active, and in earnest to every other interest, but the interests of eternity? Have you no desire to become Christians, and no courage to strive to enter into the straight gate? If you have, it is you the Saviour is speaking to in the text. He would have you holy, happy, and saved. He came for the great purpose of seeking and saving that which was lost. Listen to him. His counsels to you are, "Deny yourself; take up your cross; follow me!" Hear him. Hear him, I say; his voice is not the voice of storms; it is a still, small voice addressed to the inward ear. Hear him, and follow him wherever he goes. His path is sometimes in the bright sunlight; sometimes it is in the mighty waters; sometimes it is where you may not find a place to lay your head; sometimes it may be through the deep wilderness; and we know it must at last be through the dark and chilled valley; but wherever he goes, follow him. Swerve not from his truth, for it is the bread of life; nor from his promises, for they are sure; nor from his sacrifice, for it is your hope; nor from his presence, his love, himself, for they

are your strength in weakness, your consolation in trial, your comforter in your short passage through this transitory world, your conquest over the last foe. Follow him to the last ; and after having washed your robes and made them white in his blood ; after having walked in some measure as he walked, participated with him in his trials and conflicts, and borne that measure of his cross which may be assigned to you, you shall follow him, not to his cross, but to his grave and his home.

SERMON X.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

JOHN iii. 14, 15. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

THE Apostle Paul says to the Corinthians, "Neither let us tempt *Christ*; as some of them tempted him in the wilderness, and were destroyed of serpents." The condition of the children of Israel, at the time to which the Apostle here refers, was in many respects greatly affecting. They were now in the thirty-ninth year of their pilgrimage, and after many wanderings, were once more in the ordinary course of the caravans through the Arabian desert to the valleys of Palestine. Though greatly diversified by miracles of mercy and of judgment, it had been a tedious and monotonous journey; and "the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." It had been circuitous and intricate; and it lay through an enemy's land. They had taken many false steps, and had incurred the displeasure of God. There had been many defections; and the mass of those who had come to years of manhood when they left Egypt, had died in the wilderness. Miriam and Aaron were dead, and Moses, too, their great leader, was shortly to be removed from them, to go up to Mount Nebo and die.

Yet the promise was sure that they should be put in possession of the long wished-for inheritance. And they were now in high expectation of soon coming to the close of their tedious march. But in this their expectations were disappointed. Moses had just sent a request to the King of Edom to grant them an unmolested passage through his land ; and to this request he had received not only an uncourteous, but a threatening refusal. So that the children of Israel were obliged to leave the mountains of Idumea, go round the territory of Edom, and pursue their journey once more by the way of the Red Sea.

This was a trial too great for them to submit to ; they could not bear to see their hopes thus suddenly cut off, and again to be under the necessity of encountering the solitude, and drought, and privations of the Desert. They were depressed and disheartened ; they murmured and rebelled. “ They spake *against God and against Moses*, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness ? For there is no bread, neither is there any water ; and our soul loatheth this light bread—this manna which is given to us.”

A poor return was this for all their experience of God’s care and nurture ! God was angry with them, and in the midst of their guilty and tumultuous complaints, sent the fiery messengers of his indignation among them to silence their ingratitude and seditious murmurings. “ The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died.”

Yet “ in wrath did God remember mercy.” Great as their provocations had been, there was a heaven-devised remedy. And the Lord said unto Moses,

"Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

This, very summarily told, is the story of "Moses' lifting up the serpent in the wilderness." It is needless to ask what it means; for every man who reads the Bible knows. It was a prefiguration of Christ, the Great Healer, who was lifted up on the cross. Though a mere serpent of brass, it was emblematical of something more. "For, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

And now what are the great and instructive lessons which this interesting piece of history teaches us? Every man of reflection must see that it is fraught with salutary counsel. We remark from it,

I. In the first place, that *the sins of men expose them to the wrath of God.*

Like the children of Israel in their journey through the wilderness, men have rebelled against God in their short journey through this wilderness world. Like the sins of Israel, their sin is "written with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond." Hatred of God and disobedience of his law; his goodness trampled on, and his mercy rejected; his patience abused, his expostulations disregarded; all indicate a state of mind that is alienated from the Holy One of Israel; a heart that is hardened in sin and desperately wicked. There may be those who are so careless, as to give no heed to such

representations of human wickedness; and there may be those who are so impious and profane, as to deride them. But this does not alter their solemn truth. Many there are who depreciate the aggravation, and more who forget the number of their transgressions; but this neither diminishes the turpitude, nor blots out the existence of their forgotten wickedness. Not a few are the ways which the God of heaven adopts, to remind us of our sin and admonish us of its exceeding sinfulness; yet do the mass of men resist those admonitions, and pursue their sinful courses with little short of absolute infatuation, and as though "madness were in their hearts." Ample and melancholy is the proof of human wickedness, every day presented to our eyes, and in whatever direction we look. Practical atheism and speculative infidelity, profligacy and pleasure, contempt of God's word and ordinances, profanity and Sabbath-breaking, fraud and falsehood, intemperance and licentiousness, are sins over which both the sea and the land mourn.

It were the deepest stupidity to allow ourselves to believe that the Lord God will suffer the sins of men to go unpunished. His nature is holy, his law is holy, and his word, faithful and true, everywhere assures us that he "will by no means clear the guilty." There are not wanting means and instruments of his vengeance, when the hour is come to punish a guilty man, or visit their iniquity upon a guilty people. Sometimes the earth opens and swallows them up; sometimes fire from heaven comes down and destroys them; sometimes the stormy wind ingulfs them in the deep waters. Sometimes war desolates them, and they become the prey of the ferocious and relentless passions of men. Some-

times they breathe a poisoned atmosphere, and die of pestilence and plague. Sometimes the seasons are withered, the earth refuses to yield her fruits, and they perish by famine. Sometimes God bears long with them, and delays to strike the blow, and lets it fall the heavier at the last, and sinks them into the pit of eternal despair.

Very often "wicked men do not live out half their days." God curses them as he did the inhabitants of Canaan, and exterminates them from the earth. In the brief narrative which is given of the rebellious Israelites, and to which there is a reference in the text, God teaches us a lesson we ought never to forget. It was a fearful hour to this wicked people, when he commissioned that army of deadly serpents noiselessly to shoot along the earth, everywhere instilling their burning venom into these blasphemers against the God of Israel. It was a scene of universal confusion and misery. Here were the exclamations of terror, and there the more mournful cries of grief and despair. Some were in the agonies of a dreadful death; while others had already fallen victims to their scorching anguish, and were dead.

What a lesson is this for us! It is but the picture of that more scorching indignation which we all deserve for our sins, and like the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, "set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Review your own life, and ask yourselves if there is nothing in your melancholy history which resembles the history of these Israelites, and whether you do not deserve the final destruction which was inflicted on them? The Lord God, long-suffering and gracious, may not now pour out

upon you the fury of his anger ; but there is a storm of wrath thicker than ever lowered over the affrighted ocean. There is no folly like that which affects to despise the divine threatenings. God does not trifle with us, and he will not permit us to trifle with him. He would fain reclaim men from their guilty indifference, because he is loth to make them the monuments of his wrath. He is in earnest when he threatens, and he is in earnest when he tries the arguments of mercy. And these form,

II. The second topic of instruction suggested by the text, and *imbodied in that significant emblem of the crucified Saviour, which Moses lifted up in the wilderness.*

The Israelites perished in great numbers for their foolish and wicked revolt. Stung by the fiery serpents, they had all been inevitably lost, but for the brazen serpent which Moses lifted up on the top of one of the standards of Israel in the midst of the camp. All human remedies were powerless. In all the circles of friendship, in all the skill of man, in all the kingdom of nature, there were no efforts, no means, no counsels that could save them. There was but this one remedy—the serpent which Moses lifted up.

So there is but this one remedy for men, stung by the fiery darts of the Old Serpent, and destroyed by that spirit “which worketh in the children of disobedience.” All are inevitably lost, without Christ. “There is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby they must be saved.” To the eye of human reason, there was nothing in the serpent of brass that could encourage the hopes of the dying Israelites. Who would have thought that it possessed such healing

virtue? Many a proud Israelite probably reasoned thus with himself, and said, "How can this senseless piece of metal effect such a wonderful cure?" And just so do men reason about the cross of Christ. It is "a stumbling block to the Jew, and to the Greek foolishness." It does not commend itself to the reasoning pride, and to the depraved and self-sufficient heart of man. The despised Son of Mary, nailed to the tree on Golgotha, how is he to justify, and regenerate, and save sinners to the remotest bounds of earth and sea, and to the remotest ages of time? "He hath neither form, nor comeliness, that we should desire him; we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not."

Yet is this God's method of mercy, as truly as was the serpent in the wilderness the appointed remedy for the otherwised ruined Israelites. Men may scoff at it, and say it has no saving virtue; but the God of heaven has imparted to it such efficacy, that through this crucified Saviour his own mercy, his rich and abounding mercy, his mercy to pardon and save the chief of sinners, may, consistently both with the divine attributes and the divine government, be, and is freely communicated to all who will stoop to receive it.

The efficacy of the death of Christ depends upon a few intelligible principles distinctly revealed in the Scriptures. He who was lifted up on the cross of Calvary was no sinner; yet was he lifted up *as* a sinner, under the *resemblance* of a sinner, and in the place, the room and stead of sinners. He who "knew no sin was made sin *for us*;" and though not himself a transgressor, he "was *numbered* with the transgressors, and bare the sin of many." His death was appointed by God *as*

a satisfaction to his justice, instead of the sinner's death; and is accepted as such a satisfaction. It was the death of no mere creature, but of God's incarnate Son, his second self, his own Son, the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." He was the Great High Priest who offered up *himself* to God for us; who gave up *himself* to do and to suffer all that the law and justice of God required for the expiation of human sin; thus bringing pardon to all who believed in him; giving them peace, healing the guilt-stung conscience, and "purging it from dead works to serve the living God."

There is one fact of importance in relation to the serpent lifted up in the wilderness, which illustrates the all-sufficiency and fulness of Christ's redemption. It was *lifted up*; it was raised aloft, so that all Israel could look at it; and so high and so brilliant was it, that the most distant in that vast company of more than two millions of people, might easily see it from the remotest limits of the camp. Children could see it, and nursing infants writhing in agony in their mothers' arms, might be held up to look upon it and live. So is it with him who was lifted up on the cross: it was that "*whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." The language of that mighty sufferer is, "Look unto me and be ye saved, *all ye ends of the earth*, for I am God, and there is none else." There is no poor sinner who has not a divine warrant to look to Christ for salvation. He is a "propitiation for the sins of the world." He is offered to all; "*whosoever* will may come;" nor is there a sinner on the broad earth, or broader sea, who hears this testimony, but may believe it and embrace it for his own soul, and

have all the relief, the peace, the joy of this great salvation. One and all of you, my hearers, may have this salvation; and it is because you do not choose to take it, if it do not indeed belong to you.

And this thought leads us,

III. To the third and last lesson which the text inculcates, which is, that *we become partakers of this great remedy for human sin and woe, by personally receiving it.*

Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that every one who *looked upon it* might live. Bring before your minds the camp of Israel, when Moses announced to them the answer of God to his prayer that he would heal the people. Set the scene before you, as he lifted up on the staff of one of the highest standards, the token of deliverance which God had ordained, and caused to be proclaimed throughout all these tribes, *WHOSO LOOKETH ON IT SHALL LIVE!* There the signal stands lifted up in the air above all their tents; while everywhere there goes forth from it a noiseless but reviving power. No matter what the varieties of the disease, or the intensity of the poison, or the stage of its progress; whosoever *looked* recovered. Woe to the unhappy Israelite who neglected the remedy! But happy,—happy the man, who, ever so covered with wounds, and ever so deeply scarred, turned his eyes toward the divinely-appointed signal!

Such is the meaning of the language, the Son of Man was “lifted up, that whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” The remedy is yours in offer even while it is rejected; but it is not yours in possession until you have accepted it. How can it be? How can it be if it is treated as a worth-

less thing, and trampled under your feet?" The serpent in the wilderness was but a conditional provision for the whole camp of Israel; the condition was that they should *look* upon it; and the death of Christ is a conditional provision for this whole world of sinners; and the condition is, that they believe in it.

The look of the perishing Israelite was but the look of the *eye*. Yet was it one to which he was impelled by a sense of his sufferings, and which he had no desire to withhold. He believed in the testimony of God, that looking he should live. It would seem that this whole people came running to Moses, crying, "We have sinned; for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee. Pray unto the Lord that he may take away the serpents from us!" God gives the sinner relief when he feels the burden of his sins, and thus looks to Jesus. Men never truly sue for mercy, without an ingenuous confession of guilt. No unhumbled mind ever truly looks to Christ, or has a part in the great remedy he has provided. We shall find healing and relief from the venomous disease, the burning poison of sin, only as we thus feel its effects, pray to be delivered from its power, and lay hold of that deliverance by faith. With the same mingled emotions of lamentation and hope with which the supplicating Israelite looked to the brazen serpent, and with more than their relentings, ought we to look to him who was lifted up on the cross. Delightful is that look of faith, delightful is that relief! What a memorable hour is that when the soul looks to Jesus, and feels the plague of sin stayed, the sources of death drying up withering him! It is not able to repress its joy, but gives glory to God.

O fellow-sinners, look and live! Do not despise so

great salvation. As the eyes of thousands turned to that one banner in Israel, that had upon it the brazen serpent, so let your eyes be turned toward Christ. God your Saviour is almighty, and he invites you to look and live. Despair of help except from him. Nothing is impossible with God. There is yet time for you to look and live, and to give glory to him. From the tents of Judah to the outermost ranks of Asher and Naphtali, the voice is still heard, *Look and live*. There stands the cross; come to it with all your sins and your sorrows, and it shall never be that you perish.

I would not leave you to-day, without leading you to that Saviour. Will you not look up to that mighty Deliverer, and accept that signal deliverance which is ordained in heaven? Will you not "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ?" O ye who still neglect him! ye have not comprehended the height and depth of his love. You have not appreciated the glad tidings of his great salvation. Aged, weather-beaten sailor, look to that cross. Youthful sailor, look to that cross. You may not now believe that you are bitten by the poisonous tooth of sin. But if you go not to that cross, and cast not yourselves upon that Saviour, and find healing in his atoning blood, the poison will rage and the flame will burn that never can be quenched.

I sum up the thoughts presented in this discourse in the language of a man, who was once a sailor, like yourselves, and who afterwards lived and died one of the most eminent ministers of Christ the world has known.

"As the serpent raised by Moses,
Heal'd the burning serpent's bite;
Jesus thus himself discloses
To the wounded sinner's sight.

"Hear his gracious invitation :

'I have life and peace to give ;
I have wrought out full salvation,
Sinner, look to me and live.

" ' You had been forever wretched,
Had not I espoused your part ;
Now behold my arms outstretched
To receive you to my heart.

" ' Well may shame, and joy, and wonder,
All your inward passions move ;
I could crush you with my thunder,
But I speak to you in love.'

" Dearest Saviour ! we adore thee
For thy precious life and death ;
Melt each stubborn heart before thee,
Give us all the eye of faith."

"Glory to God in the highest ; peace on earth, and
good will to men !" Amen !

SERMON XI.

ALL IS WELL.

MARK vii. 37. He hath done all things well.

God's way is in the sea, and his path in the mighty waters. The dispensations of his providence are sometimes bright, and sometimes shrouded in darkness. They are often so mysterious and so unlooked-for, that it requires a state of mind not always enjoyed, to take in the whole extent of them, and be satisfied that "All is well."

All is well! A soothing, cheering cry is this, when the watchman utters it, in his solitary walks of vigilance and care through the crowded and slumbering city; and when the warder utters it, as he patrols the walls of the castle that borders on the enemy's country! It is indeed a delightful state of mind to feel this truth; and when we look abroad over the world, and over the universe God has made, to have the inward and calm assurance that "he hath done all things well." It is the highest privilege of a good man, in the midst of the most violent tempests that assail his earthly hopes, with his hand on the truth and promises of God, and his eyes directed toward heaven, to be satisfied that *All is well*. Like the fabled stone of the alchemist which turned everything it touched into gold, this is a confidence, a faith in God, which changes

night into day, and transforms evil into good. Let us attempt both to explain and prove this great truth.

I. Our first object is to *explain* it.

Men are very partial and poor judges of the works and ways of God. We have no evidence that even the pure and lofty minds of angels fully understand them; for "*who* by searching can find out God, who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" It is only the infinite mind of God himself that comprehends all that he does; that views everything in its true light, because it sees everything as it is, and in all its connections and consequences. He alone appreciates everything according to its real worth, because "he sees the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done."

When the Patriarch Jacob was bereaved of his dearest earthly hopes, he exclaimed, in great gloom and depression of mind, "All these things are *against* me!" But he could see but a little ways. He could not see far enough to know what the end of them would be, nor how easily God could govern, and direct, and overrule "all these things," and make them "work together for his good." What is well in our view is not always well in God's. What often appears to us to be our best seasons, prove in the end to have been our worst; and what often appear to us to be our worst seasons, prove to be our best. What is best for us to-day, may not be the best for us to-morrow. What is best for us in time, may not be best for us in eternity. What is best for our worldly prosperity and comfort, may not be for the real and substantial good of our immortal souls.

All is well that ends well. All is well that makes us in the end the most holy, the most useful, and the most

happy. All is well that establishes us in the faith and hope of the Gospel; that promotes our sanctification, and fits us for death and heaven. All is well that concurs in conducting us safely through the difficulties and dangers of this short life, to "the rest that remaineth for the people of God."

Nor is this all. God not unfrequently makes his people suffer, not for their own sakes only, but for others' sakes. And it is well when he does this. Job was a great sufferer, and so was Paul; but the narrative of their sufferings, and of their spirit under God's dealings with them, has made thousands holier and happier than they would have been, had these holy men never have been such sufferers. "None of us liveth to *himself*, and none of us dieth to *himself*." It matters little what we enjoy, or suffer, in the present world, if we thereby best promote the mutual and collective benefit of our fellow-men, advance the kingdom of God in the earth, promote the enlargement, stability, and purity of his cause, and glorify his great name. All good men form a part of that kingdom; if that kingdom prospers, and prospers the more through their toil, and self-denial, and suffering; not only is it well, but it is better for them themselves, than though they had never thus toiled and suffered. When the saints of God reach their Father's house, and are with Christ in heaven, and there see that, through those very dispensations of which they complained on earth, others have been brought to those "many mansions," and they themselves are compensated a thousand fold for all their sufferings; how will they wonder at their short-sightedness, in not having seen beforehand that it was all for the best!

God always makes the means he uses answer the ends he intends they shall answer. He *means* well by everything he does ; and he *does* well because he never fails to accomplish the end he has in view. He does not now tell us all the reasons for all that he does ; but they are wise and good reasons, and though we may not know them now, we shall know them hereafter. He does *all* things well ;—prosperous and adverse, small and great, everywhere and always. Single events, and those which, when isolated and taken apart, are gloomy and distressing, collectively and in their final issues, are full of light and joy.

Thus much for the explanation of the truth, that he hath done all things well.

II. Let us turn our attention, in the second place, to the proof of it. Our proof shall be confined to the following considerations :—

1. In the first place, let us look at the *perfection of the Divine goodness*. “God is good, and he *does* good.” “He is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.” There is not one malignant or evil affection in his nature. There is not one emotion even of cold indifference. “God is *love* ;” in all its purity, in all its expansiveness, in all its ardor and intensity, God is *love*. His goodness shines forth in the heavens, is showered down from the clouds, and overlays the earth and sea. It stoops to guilty man, and visits him with one continued flow of blessings. Like the sun in the heavens, his goodness everywhere sheds its benign influence to warm and animate, and make the earth on which we tread glow with its sacred fires.

He who sent his Son to seek and to save that which was lost, must be a great and good Being. No man

can go and stand by the cross of Christ, and doubt God's goodness. No Christian man can think of that love which, when he was an enemy, reconciled him to God by the death of his Son, and then question his goodness. Look where he will, he sees evidence of it. Go where he will,—to the Bible, to the throne of grace, to the world, to scenes of joy or woe, among enemies, or among friends, and he sees, he feels that God is good. If there is a truth in the Bible, in relation to which it were impiety to cherish a doubt, it is the truth that God is good. We cannot think of God, except as a Being of perfect and infinite goodness. We can form no other idea of him; the human mind starts back with horror at any other suggestion; we never speak of him, we cannot speak of him otherwise than as good. We admire his goodness; we adore, we praise it. Those surely know little of God, who may be tempted to think that he is not good enough to do all things well.

The proof of this truth is derived,

2. In the second place, from the *perfection of the Divine knowledge*. He is not only good enough to do all things well, but he knows how to do this. We do not know, nor see how it can be done. Our fellow-men, even the wisest of them, do not know. Angels in heaven do not know. If it were put to the greatest and wisest of all created beings to control and direct any *one* event, so as to secure the best and happiest results, he would confess his ignorance. Much less would he know how to do *all things* well.

But God knows. His understanding is infinite; he comprehends all creatures and events at one intuitive view; he knows what is best to be done in every possible circumstance and exigency. He feels no difficulty,

he has no embarrassment, no doubt, or hesitation. Nothing takes him by surprise, but he "is wonderful in counsel," and "taketh the wise in their own craftiness." It was his wisdom that sent Joseph into Egypt, and Israel into Babylon; that presided over the councils of Herod and Pontius Pilate, when they were assembled "to do what his hand and counsel determined before to be done." These were fearful and wicked events, and men "meant them for evil." But God "meant them for good." He knows what is best to be done, and how to conduct all the affairs of his government so as to do all things well.

We prove this truth,

3. In the third place, from the *perfection of the Divine power*. There is no restraint upon his power, but he is able to do all things well. There is no instance in which he cannot do this. A failure in his power were the most disastrous intelligence that could be announced. We cannot conceive of his power failing in one instance, without fearing that it may prove incompetent in a thousand instances, and those which form the most important crises in his government, and the welfare of his creatures.

But there is no failure. "Power belongeth unto God;" it is his high prerogative; and that, without which, he is no longer God. "None can stay his hand." He is "the Almighty God." He is "wise in heart and mighty in strength: and none can say unto him, What doest thou?" The elements, the times, the seasons, the winds, the waters, the occurrences of every day and hour, the history of the rich and the poor, of monarchs and their subjects, of the church and the world, of the living and the dead, all proclaim the re-

sistless energy of his power. The views, the hearts, the conduct of men, of angels, and even of devils proclaim it.

Great events are often brought about by little causes. It is a beautiful view of God's power, which sees it thus controlling the minute, as well as the vast, so that no link in the chain may be broken, or out of its place, and no wheel in the complicated machinery may move either faster or slower, nor receive any other direction than that which he gives it. The manna and the quails in the desert—the water from the rock in Horeb—the ravens that fed Elijah—the widow's cruse of oil—the worms that fed upon the living flesh of Herod—the sparrows on the house-top—the hairs of our head—the lot that is cast into the lap—all bear testimony to his uncontrollable and absolute power over all things, and show that he is able to do all things well. If God, then, is good enough to do all things well; and if he has the knowledge and the power so to do; we may be confident that his work is perfect.

But we prove this truth,

4. In the fourth place, *from his own declarations*. It is a great and important truth to be taught and believed; and therefore he has solemnly asserted it in his word. In the Bible we find declarations like the following: "He is a Rock; his work is perfect." "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all." "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God doeth it that men might fear before him." "He is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." "All things

work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose."

It is enough that God himself makes these assertions. And there is a multitude of others like them. We have no stronger evidence than his word. "Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Though further proof is needless, this truth may be proved,

5. In the fifth place, by *facts and experience*. The darkest events in the world have actually turned out for good. Many a time have men acknowledged this, and given glory to God. They have triumphed in that which once covered them with mourning, and many a time have been constrained to say with joy, "Dominion is with him!"—"The Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and let the earth rejoice!"—"To the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever!" The private history of individuals and the general history of the world, are everywhere expressive of this great truth. There is nothing which the history of nations brings out more clearly, than the wisdom of God in overruling the darkest and most untoward events, and turning them to good and valuable account. God makes even the wrath of man praise him. When we read the history of the Jews, of the Assyrians, of the Greeks and Romans, of the Northern tribes of Europe, of the modern nations of the earth, not excluding our own; we cannot fail to remark how wonderfully the goodness, wisdom, and power of Almighty God are there disclosed, and for the purpose of accomplishing his own most wise and righteous, and benevolent designs. Two mighty and antagonist agents are seen in the history of our world—the

principle of light and the principle of darkness—a good principle and an evil—God and the great Adversary—God and the proud and wicked heart of man ; and though it sometimes seems as though the evil was dominant, yet a thoughtful mind will see that God is on the throne, and that even the wickedest of the wicked are but the saw and the hammer in the hands of this great Master Builder of the spiritual temple.

So it has been in every age. So it is now. And has it not been so with *you*? Does not your own experience, up to the present hour, show that “he hath done all things well?” Has not what has seemed to you as evil, resulted in good ; and what you thought a trial, turned out to be a blessing in disguise? Have not the most painful providences, and the bitterest cup, been the means of humbling you, and making you feel your own weakness ; of making you distrust yourselves and trust in the living God? Every Christian can say, I have often complained of God’s dealings with me ; but they have drawn me to my Saviour ; they have led me to appreciate his grace and faithfulness ; and by a new and sweet experience of his love, with a more child-like simplicity, they have taught me to lean on his almighty arm! What good man, save the sins he has committed, if he has a just view of things, would alter a single event in his past history? And even his sins have been, or will be, overruled for God’s glory.

Most devoutly is it to be wished, that this truth, that God does all things well, were more generally and more deeply felt. O how it would tranquillize our fears, give quietness and joy to our submission, vigor to our hopes, and light up our dark dungeon! How sweet to feel it amid the stormy voyage of life, and on its angry ocean,

where he lifteth up the waves, and then says to them, "Peace, be still!" How much happier should we be, if we could but learn to go out from ourselves, and out from this poor world, for the sources of our peace and joy! It is a portion above the heritage of the noble and the mighty, to be able to say, My all is in the hands of God, who knows all, who can do all, and who will make all things work together for my good.

Why should the care and faithfulness of your Heavenly Father ever be distrusted? Why not stay yourselves upon him, "casting all your care upon him, knowing that he careth for you?" Why not say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me!" The Lord God "is a sun and shield, he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Ye who are strangers to the living God, "acquaint yourselves now with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto you." Go to him; go to him as unworthy sinners; go to him in the name of Jesus Christ, his Son; and unworthy as you are, make the God of heaven your friend. "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desires of thy heart." It is not the greatest evil that can come upon you, to have your earthly expectations defeated. With a heart trusting in God, this you can endure without a sigh. You may lose everything which the world can give; yet all may be well. No: the greatest evil that can come upon us is, to lose the divine favor; to neglect the great salvation; to live and die without God and without hope. This salvation accepted and enjoyed, you are safe. You are happy, "blow high or blow low." You are happy, come what will. You

will be tranquil in the midst of danger, and calm amid the storm. When that dark and fearful hour of death shall come, in which no earthly voice can whisper peace to you, a voice from heaven shall whisper to you and say, *All is well!* And the sweet response of a still, small voice from within your own placid bosom, shall say, *All is well!* And when this corruption shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality; when the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, and all the tears which life has shed shall be wiped away; the blessed announcement shall be renewed, confirmed, and perpetuated, **ALL IS WELL!** And to the Triune God be praise forever. Amen.

SERMON XII.

REMEMBRANCE OF SIN.

EZEKIEL xvi. 63. That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done.

AMONG the various points of difference between good men and bad, none is more clearly revealed in the Scriptures, and none more observable in Christian experience, than that a good man remembers his sinfulness, and a bad man forgets it. Wicked men may, from time to time, have severe compunctions of conscience; there may be periods in their history, and events in the providence of God, which fill them with alarm; but these terrors are occasional, and their sense of sin soon passes away. They try to forget it, and do forget it. Though the day is coming when the remembrance of it will be revived and imbittered, for the most part, they are too successful in their efforts to obliterate all such impressions. It is not so with a good man. He never lives in this state of spiritual death. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, do not pass away, and find him dead, torpid, and senseless. Not only is it impossible for him to live at ease in present sin, but it is impossible for him to live without frequently calling to mind the sins that are past. Men who do not feel, and act thus, give no evidence that they are good men; but, on the other

hand, evidence that ought to be startling to their own hopes, that they are in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. A good man may have strong and precious hopes that his sins are pardoned ; but his inward peace, so far from destroying, or diminishing his sense of his own sinfulness, is but a new incentive to remember it, and “be confounded, and never open his mouth any more because of his shame, when God is pacified toward him for all that he has done.” It falls in with all the feelings of his renewed nature to feel thus. His hope in the divine mercy does not make him thoughtless ; it does not lead him to forget what is past, nor ever dismiss the remembrance of his great sinfulness. In illustrating these general thoughts, I observe,

I. In the first place, Good men are incited to the remembrance of sin *by their love of God.*

It is characteristic of a good man, that he does not “live without God in the world.” God is much in his thoughts, and has the first place in his heart. “My meditation of him,” says the Psalmist, “shall be sweet ; I will be glad in the Lord.” Elsewhere he says, “My soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness ; my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, when I meditate on thee in the night-watches.” The remembrance of God is very apt to bring with it the remembrance of sin. The mind even of a wicked man could not long be fixed upon God without being perplexed and embarrassed by the thought of his own sinfulness. Much more does a devout mind feel this. “I have heard of thee, by the hearing of the ear,” exclaimed Job, “but now mine eye seeth thee ; wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” He is the One we have

lightly esteemed ; the forgotten, dishonored, and injured One, who, because he is "pacified toward us," is the more worthy of unoffending, unsinning love. His goodness leaves us without excuse, and makes our sins appear exceeding sinful. And it is just in this light, that good men wish and seek to view them. The clearer their conceptions of God, the more impressive is their remembrance of their own sinful, guilty, and odious conduct. Men make light of sin, only when they make light of God. They have low and mean thoughts of sin, only when they have low and mean thoughts of God. They forget sin, only when, like an atheistic world, they utterly forget God.

II. Good men are induced to the remembrance of sin, in the second place, by their *attachment to the government and law which God has established.*

It is characteristic of a good man, that he is a *friend to the divine government and law.* He feels himself to be the subject of the King of kings, and Lord of lords ; whose supremacy gives him the throne, and who lives and reigns "God over all blessed for evermore." Good men on the earth have, in every age, been distinguished for their attachment to the rightful authority of their divine Prince. The power, the grandeur, the riches of their great Sovereign ; his glories, his favor, his resistless and universal dominion, have ever been the source of heartfelt gratulation and delight to those who have ceased to be rebels, and become loyal subjects. "O how love I thy law!" says the devout Psalmist. And again he says, "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, let the earth rejoice!" These, and thoughts like these, often dwell upon the lips of the children of God. And they are thoughts in their own nature adapted to

bring with them the remembrance of their own sinfulness. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." "Sin is the transgression of the law." "Sin, by the commandment, becomes exceedingly sinful." To require what is right, and forbid what is wrong, in deed, word, thought, and on pains and penalties which interminable ages show are commensurate with the transgressor's ill desert, is that which every good man knows the Deity must do, or be undeified, and no longer God. Wherever sin exists, therefore, it is the same odious and ill-deserving thing. It is transgression of the law; it is the curse of the universe; it is the abhorrence of the divine mind. It is not less hateful, nor less hated of God, in any man, because he is a Christian; but rather more hateful, and more hated. Nor is his vivid and keen remembrance of his iniquity at all abated, by the hope that the Holy Lawgiver is pacified toward such a sinner as himself. How can it be, in view of that law which he has so dishonored, and which his Saviour has so magnified and made honorable? Never can he lose sight of the criminality and turpitude of his transgressions, and never can they cease to be burdensome and loathsome. Just as natural objects appear differently by the light in which they are seen, are the sins of men exhibited in true light by the law of God. Though committed in bygone years, they no longer appear at a distance; and though they once seemed small, they are now exhibited in truer magnitude. The heart bleeds at such a retrospect. Memory sinks the sin deep. And though atoning blood may give peace, it obliterates not the remembrance of the sin.

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III. Good men are induced to the remembrance of sin, in the third place, *by their love of the Divine Saviour.*

It is characteristic of every good man, that he *is a sincere lover of Christ and his Gospel.* His love of Christ is his ruling passion. He has forsaken all for Christ. He has cheerfully renounced every opposing and rival claim, and taken up his cross, that he might follow Christ. If not his earliest, Christ now has his first and best, love. There are no attachments he cannot renounce for the sake of Christ; no wealth which he cannot relinquish for the unsearchable riches of Christ; no honors he cannot forego for the honor which cometh from God only; no power he cannot disclaim in order to live for Christ, and reign with him; no knowledge he does not count as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord. His presence is his highest joy; his Gospel the theme of his wondrous thoughts and admiring praise; his blood, is his purity and peace; his righteousness, his title to the heavenly inheritance. And therefore it is, that such a man remembers his iniquities, even when others forget them. His fondest love of Christ, and his most unclouded hopes, are immingled with many a bitter and touching recollection of his own vileness. Pardoned as he is, he feels deeply and tenderly what it is to be a pardoned sinner. The thought is often present to his mind, at what an amazing sacrifice this immunity was procured; by whose sorrows, he is happy; by whose tears, he smiles; by whose death, he lives; by whose cross, he expects to reign. The vain fancy has fled, that there is some reason in himself why *he* should be the object of the divine favor. All that he hopes for is in defiance of his own unworthiness and ill desert. The

very thought that "God is pacified toward him for all that he has done," leads him to remember what a sinner he has been, and to be confounded, and never open his mouth any more because of his shame. A memory at peace with God is not a faithless memory; nor is a conscience pacified by the blood of sprinkling an unfeeling conscience. The Saviour forgives, but the forgiven does not forget his sins. That look of tenderness on Peter made him "go out and weep bitterly." That thrice repeated question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" opened all the sources of penitential recollection afresh. Christian love does not soon forget the injuries sin has done. It were a dreadful perversity of moral feeling, to be forgetful of sin because it is forgiven. Good men have a deeper sense of their sins after they are pardoned than before, and a more faithful remembrance of them. Pardon is precious, but it is the means to a greater and more important end. God forgives sin, that the grace expressed in forgiveness may produce that grateful love, which, while it remembers transgression, remembers only to forsake it. How little do they understand of the Gospel,—of the revelation of the redeeming love of God,—of the tidings of mercy to sinners through a divine Mediator, who impute to it a tendency to lead the pardoned sinner to forget his sins. But,

IV. In the fourth place, good men are led to the remembrance of sin by *an enlightened and tender conscience*.

It is characteristic of every Christian, that *he has an enlightened and tender conscience*. He is not merely an alarmed and awakened sinner, but the subject of ingenuous conviction. Nor is his conviction diminished because he is a Christian, but the rather increased;

nor is it a transient and passing emotion, but one that remains. The convictions of conscience in an unrenewed man, are occasional; in a man who is born of God, they are habitual. The former are partial; the latter are universal, and extend to every form and degree of sin. In an unrenewed man they are the effect of fear merely; in the heart that is renewed, they are the effect of love. The consciences of wicked men know nothing of the high principles, the elevated motives, which give rise to that conviction for sin which exists in the bosom of the true Christian. The very relief which the conscience of a good man finds in confessing and forsaking his sins, and in a believing application to the blood of Christ, makes his conscience more tender and faithful. He does not inquire what is the lowest measure of grace to evince that he is a child of God; nor what, and how many sins he may commit, and yet be saved at last. He does not ask how sin may be sheltered and screened, but how it may be detected; nor does he seek to know how far it may be indulged, but how it may be mortified. And for the same reason, he does not seek to forget, but rather to remember it; and just in the degree in which his conscience becomes enlightened and tender. He welcomes all its reproaches, nor does he the less willingly call his sins to remembrance, that they fill him with self-loathing and self-condemnation. It is one of the privileges of his adoption, that God will not allow the conscience of such a man to become seared and hardened; but keeps it alive to search out, and mark down, and remember his wickedness. Nor does he restrain his conscience in her scrutinizing survey; but bids her remind him of all that he has done. Nor does

she perform her work deceitfully ; but calls to his remembrance all the aggravating circumstances of time, place, manner, rejected admonition and entreaty, the complicated character of his transgressions, the object at which he was aiming, the light he resisted, the influence he jeoparded, and the earnest dispensation of the Gospel he enjoyed. Nor does he stifle her voice, nor soften the severity of her censures, nor bribe her to judge him with lenity. His prayer to God has often been, " Make me to know my transgression and my sin ;" and he who heareth prayer commissions conscience to make the mournful disclosure, that his people may remember and be confounded, and never open their " mouth any more, because of their shame, when he is pacified toward them for all that they have done." I remark,

V. In the fifth place, *There are great advantages in this remembrance of sin.*

It is a most humbling view of the human character which is brought to the mind of every Christian, in the remembrance of his past sins. The child of God has no sympathy with those who exalt the depraved character of man. In the humbling remembrance of his own wickedness, he has evidence that the human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. He sees that his own history is but the counterpart of those descriptions of human apostasy, which are given in God's word. Nor do these reminiscences obscure the light of his hopes, and lead him to despondency. He is not alone in them ; but they are the common recollections of all the people of God. He would not be a Christian, if he did not feel that he had much to remember that needed to be for-

given. The fact that he thus remembers his wickedness, is to be attributed to the existence of those gracious affections which never have a place in the soul without many a confession of what is past. The Adversary may perplex his mind, disturb his peace, weaken his hands, and discourage his heart, and plunge him for a little season in darkness and despondency, by such a retrospect; but he is not ignorant of his devices. The more Christian men look within their own hearts, and look back upon their own history, the more they see the wonderful fitness of that method of mercy which Christ has revealed, to the character and condition of just such sinners as they are. They feel that they have need of all the fulness of that great salvation, all its mercy, all its grace, and all the efficacy of its atoning blood. And they never have stronger impressions of its riches and gratuity, and of the hearty welcome with which it greets them, than in this humbling remembrance of their own vileness. The divine mercy is never so precious, as in such remembrances as these. And it is a happy sign of reconciliation to God, when the reception of that mercy quickens this remembrance, and your own humility and gratitude. That mercy fails of one of its most delightful effects, if it does not humble you and lead you to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" The more you cherish this remembrance, the more will you cherish the grateful remembrance of God's love. The more will you trust him in view of all that is past; and the more will you continue to trust in him in time to come. The more will you love and obey him, and the more will you glorify and enjoy him forever.

There is one painful remark which I feel constrained

to make in the conclusion of this discourse. And it is addressed to those of you, beloved hearers, who make light of sin. Sin is that which no being in the universe can make light of. God does not make light of it. The Saviour could not make light of it when he bore the heavy burden, not his own, upon the cross. Angels do not make light of it. The devils in hell cannot make light of it, but groan under the fearful load to all eternity. Good men cannot make light of it; but think of it and remember it with deep abasement and shame. And you, my friends, cannot always make light of it, nor always forget it. The time will come, when you will remember it all. God grant, that it may not be too late to escape from the awful burden! Memory will not always be thus inactive. Be sure your sin will find you out. Conscience will not always be thus torpid. The all-seeing eye has ever been upon you, and is upon you still. Ten thousand times ten thousand are the witnesses of all your wickedness. There is, indeed, no need of witnesses. You *yourselves know all*; and you yourselves will be witnesses of all. You cannot escape from the reproach and shame of sin, until you can escape from yourselves. Though you climb to the mountains, dig into the depths, *conscience* will be there. Fearful remembrances of sin and agonizing rebukes of conscience await you, even though you sleep on till death and the judgment. And still more fearful will they be, when from that judgment-seat you go away to that world, where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

Nor is there any refuge from such a doom save one. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so has the Son of Man been lifted up. This is the remedy for

the conscience stung with the guilt of sin. The universe knows no other. Memory is soothed in her recollections, when faith looks to this Lamb of God. The heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience, when its penitence flows out at the cross. Its wounds are stanchèd, and its anguish is relieved, by the blood of that Great Healer. You who make light of sin, make light of this mighty remedy. You who forget sin, forget the only cure and relief for sin. How long, thoughtless and forgetful sinner, how long wilt thou make light of them! Mercy yet knocks, calls, pleads, beseeches, and waits. Near as you are to the brink of destruction, there is an arm that can draw you back; great as is your danger, there is a hiding place that can shelter you. O escape for thy life! Turn ye to the stronghold, all ye who are as yet the prisoners of hope.

SERMON XIII.

RUNNING FOR THE PRIZE.

CORINTHIANS ix. 24. So run that ye may obtain.

It is not every man who seeks to enter the kingdom of heaven that is able. The first step is not always followed out; and the pilgrim steps aside into some by-path which does not lead to the Heavenly City. There will be many disappointments in the day when Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets, enter into the kingdom of God, and the children of the kingdom are cast out.

Nothing is more important, therefore, than the most watchful care in determining what the course is we are pursuing; and whether we are "so running, that we may obtain." "Know ye not, that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?" *How*, then, shall we run the spiritual race, so as to obtain? It is to this question that I propose, by God's assistance, to give answer in the following discourse. In endeavoring to do this, I remark,

I. In the first place, So to run that he may obtain, a man must be *in the right way*.

Men are by nature in the "broad way that leads to death." They must alter their course; and the alteration must be radical and thorough. They must have new principles, new aims and ends, and altogether a different Guide and Leader. No matter

how engaged a man is in running, if he is not in the right way, every step he takes, and the faster he runs, only conducts him farther from the prize. The man-slayer, under the Mosaic law, was directed to flee to one of the appointed cities of refuge; and if he failed of reaching it, he was overtaken by the avenger of blood. If, through ignorance, or inattention, or perverseness, he happened to strike upon the wrong track, no matter how diligently he ran, he was sure to pay the forfeiture of his folly with his blood. "There is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The more confident he is that he is in the right way, so long as he is actually in the wrong one, the greater is his danger.

If we look into the Bible, we find such declarations as the following: "The Son of Man came to seek, and to save that which was lost." "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." "I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER, BUT BY ME!" These declarations are an epitome of the Gospel. The way from sin to holiness, from earth to heaven, is the great redemption effected by the Son of God. To unfallen beings there is another way. They are entitled to the divine favor, and possess eternal life, by their own spotless obedience. But for fallen man, there is this very peculiar way. Justification by the deeds of law is now no longer a possible thing. To be righteous, now, men must receive a righteousness which is not their own, and which they themselves can never work out. Deliverance from the curse is effected by the payment of that great ransom, the blood of the Atoning Lamb. The destroying angel

could not invade the dwellings in Egypt that had the mark of *blood*. The "blood of sprinkling" is the true index of this "new and living way." The innocent punished for the guilty; his obedience unto death, imputed by God, and received by faith—this is the way, and the only way, to holiness and heaven.

II. So to run that he may obtain, it is necessary for a man to *divest himself of all fatal incumbrances*.

It is altogether a mistaken notion, that if a man has once entered the right way, he will find no difficulties in his course, and no obstacles, which will require all his watchfulness and effort to surmount. So thought the Israelites when they first triumphed over their enemies, and sat down upon the shores of the Red Sea to celebrate their triumphs. But the wilderness was all before them; nor was it until many a long day, and many a weary march, that they could enter the promised land. "Let not him that girdeth on his harness, boast himself as he that putteth it off!" There are many things which we must lay aside, if we would be successful in the Christian race.

Every man has burdens; embarrassments in various forms, that burden and discourage him in his heavenly career. There are also besetting sins: sins to which we are easily and frequently tempted,—sins for which we may frequently have the heart and the opportunity,—sins that commend themselves to our calling, our associations, or our constitutions—sins that meet us at every turn, and which, if not mortified and resisted, will keep us from the crown. Sin, in any form, depresses and unhinges the mind, and alike disqualifies for the cheerful performance of duty, and a cheerful reliance on the Saviour. No man, who lives any considerable time in

this world after his conversion, will reach the kingdom of heaven without arduous labor, and many self-denying duties. And these he cannot perform, if sin reigns in his heart, obscures his views, sinks his hopes, and cools his ardor.

Other things too there are which may lead him to depart from God, which must be renounced, as incumbances in his race. He may be ensnared by wealth; and the love of gold must be mortified. He may be embarrassed by his cares of houses, and lands, and merchandise; and must throw these corroding cares aside. Friends and companions may ensnare him; but he must press on, though it were to leave all for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. Sometimes he will meet with those who try to reason him out of his religion; and then those who try to laugh him out of it; and then again, some who love and respect him, and secretly grieve and express their regrets that they must lose him from their society. Some will call him formalist, and hypocrite; and he himself will fear and tremble lest it should prove too true. But he must not be influenced by these things, except to turn them to good account in hastening him on his course. It is an arduous race; but it is a career too full of hope and promise, not to lead him to lay aside every weight in order to win the prize. The men of the world run for a corruptible crown—for the olive, or the laurel, that wither as soon as they are separated from their parent stock, or plucked out of the earth; the Christian for an incorruptible—for the heavenly inheritance, for the honor that cometh from God only.

III. So to run that he may obtain, it is necessary to *persevere to the last.*

• There are those who "put their hand to the plough, and look back." They are discouraged by the difficulties of the race, and impatient of its toil. They had early impressions of serious things, and lost them. They were religiously inclined when young, but gradually threw off their religious inclinations at a more advanced period of life. They were religiously educated, but have turned their backs on "that holy name, which they were early taught to fear." Or they argued themselves into religion, and became Christians merely upon rational evidence and conviction, with no corresponding affections of heart. The time was when they were under strong animal excitement, and their feelings were enlisted, and they were softened into tenderness, and melted into tears, but it was only for the moment. Like the religion of the stony ground hearers, and backsliding Ephraim, their "goodness is as the morning cloud; and as the early dew, it goeth away." All these run, but none of them so as to obtain.

The uniform characteristic of those engaged in the heavenly race is, patient perseverance. "We are not of them that draw back to perdition, but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul." "If any man draw back, my soul hath no pleasure in him." "To him that *overcometh* will I give to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." There is no trial of the Christian character like this. The man that would "so run as to obtain," must endure to the end. He must not "run a little here and there," but persevere till he gains the prize. He must not "run by fits and starts," but steadily, and to the actual possession of the crown. He must not be satisfied with running half way, but

go up to the goal, and never stop till his feet stand on mount Zion, and he begins his everlasting song. It is a long and weary way, and over many a mountain, and many a sea, and many a sickly, sandy desert, and through much tribulation ; yet must it all be travelled over. "Not as though I had already attained," says Paul ; "but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

IV. So to run that he may obtain, it is necessary to *seek and receive grace to help in the time of need.*

The difficulties in the race are not to be removed by human wisdom and power. The heart of man is naturally disinclined to holiness, and wholly inclined to sin. In addition to the difficulty arising from the strength of natural corruption, there are difficulties arising from ignorance, from the evil customs of the world, and from the influence of invisible and malignant spirits, who are bent on our destruction. And whence is the needed help to be sought, and where is it to be found ? Who is sufficient for the work which so far transcends the power of man ? We can only answer, there is "grace to help in this time of need ;" there is a strength which is made perfect in human weakness, and which is the sweetest of all motives to diligence. The sovereign and infinite *grace of God* will raise us above all the difficulties and discouragements of the race, and make our success certain. "The youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail ; but they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint." He in whom

they have trusted does not leave, nor forsake them. When benighted, he guides them; when they fall, he lifts them up; and when they are weary and can run no farther, he takes them up and bears them as on eagles' wings;—yea, "he gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom." In the same proportion in which the people of God are cured of their overweening self-sufficiency, they find everything in their dependence to sustain and animate them. They may see their Saviour's face, even through the darkest cloud. They may hear his voice, even amid all the tumult of the world, bidding them go forward, and cheering and animating their hearts. So to run that he may obtain, therefore, a man must look to the resources of power, and wisdom, and grace, that are treasured up in Christ, and trust in those resources. Separated from these, he is like the stream, cut off from its fountain; or like the moving engine, when the propelling power is exhausted. Assiduous and unwearied perseverance are only from his close alliance with *Almighty grace*; and the prize of his high calling, the crown of righteousness, from that sovereign arbiter, that righteous Judge, who sustains him in the race, and with his own hand gives it to all who love his appearing.

Thus running, men may be sure to obtain. In making some application of these thoughts, I remark,

1. They suggest the inquiry, *Which of us so runs that he may obtain?* Are all who hear me in the *right way*? Have you entered the straight gate and the narrow way that leads to life? Is Christ all *in* you and all *to* you? Do you derive all the vigor and comfort of your principles and hopes from him? Is he your refuge from

the stormy wind and tempest? Is he the star that shines on your path in the darkest night? Is he the sun that creates your day? Is it the sacred attraction of his cross that draws you? When weary and exhausted, do you repose beneath the shadow of that "Rock of Ages;" when oppressed with hunger, do you partake of the fruit of that "Tree of Life;" when famished with thirst, do you drink of that "Fountain of living water?" Is the race you are running the "way of holiness?" Does it begin with Christ and end with Christ? Does it lead you to a conformity to his will; and as it conducts you forward, does it make you more meet for heaven? Have you learned to lean on the Spirit of all grace, to lead and illuminate, to strengthen, sanctify and comfort you in all your course? Rest not satisfied without the evidence and enjoyment of these things. The want of them will becloud your prospects; cause darkness and doubt, and fear to encircle your path; give power to your invisible enemies, and lead to painful despondency, or unholy presumption.

Let us learn from our subject,

2. That those who are running in this race, *have no cause for discouragement*. We overrate the difficulties and dangers of the course, if we look at these alone. We make too high an estimate of enemies, and too low an estimate of friends, if we forget that God is for us. Looking merely at the course, and ourselves, we might well be in a state of despondency; but looking upward, there is no place left for discouragement. The sailor who stands upon the topsail-yard, in a storm, becomes dizzy if he does not look aloft. And so the Christian must be always looking—not downward to the deep sea, but aloft and toward high heaven. The Saviour

rebuked his disciples in the storm, because they were of "a fearful heart." "My grace shall be sufficient for thee." "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms!" As sure as that grace which drew you from the pit is faithful, a few more struggles, a little longer watchfulness, and you will have measured over the ocean of human life, and reached the promised land. Let us learn, then, from our subject,

3. So to run, that we may obtain the *immortal prize*. How great does the infatuation of those appear, who run the race for any mere earthly good! Men there are, who do this. They do it to obtain a *corruptible* crown; ~~we~~ an *incorruptible*. How vast the difference! Happiness is forbidden to man here below. No man who runs for it will ever obtain the prize he seeks. He is pursuing the shadow only. He has but the show of joy. His heart is empty. His wealth, his fame, his power, his pleasures, distract, weary, confound, and trouble him, and leave him at last poor, unknown, powerless, and miserable. The soul was formed for something more than this. It flutters around created good, but cannot fix itself on anything beneath the sun. Seek durable riches and righteousness. Lay up your treasure in heaven, where moth and rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. Seek the honor that cometh from God only. Seek it where it is to be found, and where it will endure. Seek to reign forever with the Son of God, and to sit down with him on his throne. And if it is pleasure that you are seeking, seek it where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. Lay aside every weight, and *run* this heavenly race. Sloth and indifference will

not gain the prize. "So *run* that ye may obtain." From friends and foes, through evil report and good report, start for the celestial goal. Nor wait till the gates of heaven are closed. All may be lost by a little delay. Now the gates are unlocked, and the arms of mercy are open. Multitudes have gone before you, and multitudes are going now. Nor will they fail of obtaining the prize. Strive, then, to enter in. Take up the cross, and follow your Divine Leader. You "can do all things, through Christ strengthening you." And when you have gained the prize; when you receive the crown; it will be no grief of heart to you, that you ran the race. O how will the difficulties and self-denial of the course appear, when you come to look back upon them from the rewards of victory? And if there are any of you that shrink from the effort, and will not encounter the difficulties that lie in your path, then must you make up your mind to encounter all the sorrows of a lost soul, and all the woes of an undone eternity. But why do I say this? Think rather of the prize—the crown—the opening heavens and Jesus standing at the right hand of God—and in view of these, and stimulated by your Great Leader's voice, "so run that you may obtain!"

SERMON XIV.

AGGRAVATIONS OF SIN.

LUKE xii. 48. And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.

THERE is no man in the world, who thinks himself so great a sinner as he truly is in the sight of God. One reason for this is, that there is no man who has so clear and lively a sense of the *aggravations* of his sin as he ought to have. Sin is not a material substance, that can be measured, and weighed, and the quantity and weight of which never varies; it is the property, the acts, the disposition, the state of mind of a spiritual being, and which varies in its aggravations and enormity at different times, under different circumstances, and in different persons. It may not be unprofitable for us, in this discourse, to take a view of some of the different aggravations of sin.

I. In the first place, some sins are more aggravated than others, from *their nature*.

All sin has some common properties; while every distinct sin has properties peculiar to itself. Sins that are committed against God, are distinguished from sins committed against men. The worship of idols, for example, is a sin of a different nature, from the sin of discontentment. Blasphemy is a sin of a different

nature from the sin of disobedience to parents ; and Sabbath-breaking is in its nature, different from the sin of dishonesty. Some sins therefore are more aggravated than others, from their very nature. They violate greater and stronger obligations ; they arise from a more corrupt and base motive ; they express a more wicked spirit ; and they indicate a more determined, and more rash and desperate purpose, to do wickedly. The sins that are committed directly against God, are more aggravated than the sins committed against our fellow-men. So of the sins committed more immediately against our fellow-men, there is a difference in their intrinsic turpitude. Murder is more criminal than fraud ; fraud is more criminal than covetousness ; and cruelty is a greater sin than unkindness. So profane swearing is a greater sin, than light and trifling conversation ; injury to a man's person is a greater sin, than injury to his property ; and injury to his reputation and influence a greater sin, than injury either to his property or person. One sin is not greater than another from the mere arbitrary appointment of the Deity ; it is so in itself. Every sin is an unreasonable and wicked thing ; but some sins are far more unreasonable and wicked than others. Every sin is a transgression of the divine law ; but there is in some sins an energy, a malignity of disobedience, which is the origin of every other species of moral turpitude, in relation either to God or man.

II. In the second place, some sins are more aggravated than others, from the *persons who commit them*.

The same sin committed by one man, may be vastly greater than when committed by another. Other

things being equal, a prince, a magistrate, a minister of the Gospel, a parent, or any man of influence and standing in society, never sins at so low a rate as those over whom God has given him influence and authority. The very station and influence of such persons, lay them under peculiar obligations; and, instead of extenuating their sins, always aggravate them. The sins of Christians and of God's professed people, are on this account so much more aggravated than the same sins of wicked and ungodly men. This made the sin of Judas so vile; this made the sin of Peter so aggravated, when he denied his Lord with oaths and curses. This made the sin of Paul so great, and constrained him to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" This made the sins of David so fearful as to lead him to say, "Mine iniquities are gone over my head; I am troubled: I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long." There are those whose conduct cannot be judged by the same rules by which the conduct of others is judged. Nor ought it to be. God has thrown responsibilities upon them, which it is impossible for them to throw off; and if they disregard them, they necessarily sin with a higher hand than do others.

III. In the third place, the sins of men are always aggravated when they are of such a complicated character *as necessarily to involve other sins*.

All sin is, to a greater or less extent, thus complicated; so that it is true that "he that offendeth in one point, is guilty of all." But there is a more intimate connection between some parts of the divine law, and some sins, than between other parts, and other sins.

The violation of that precept, or that prohibition, which necessarily involves the violation of others, is greatly aggravated from this circumstance. Sometimes one sin involves two in the same act. Sometimes it involves three; and sometimes multitudes. The man who is guilty of the *sin of idolatry*, is guilty of ingratitude, of hatred of all excellence, of injustice, cruelty, murder, obscenity, and all those revolting crimes which sap the foundation of the social state. It is a sin which includes almost all other sins; is itself a comprehensive summary of wickedness, and a crime which, of all others, tends to degrade the character of man, and sink him to the lowest state of intellectual and moral debasement. So the crime of *profane swearing* includes the utmost contempt of God, and the imprecation of curses and damnation on our fellow-men. The spirit from which it proceeds, everywhere treats the divine claims with disrespect and levity, and would blot out the name, the very being, of God, from among men. So the *profanation of the Sabbath* is a sin that never stands alone, but includes in it a neglect of the private and public worship of God, together with a multitude of other sins to which this profanation almost always leads the transgressor, and the guilt of which is greatly augmented by being committed on God's holy day. It is impossible but the Sabbath-breaker should be a great sinner. The thief also is necessarily a deceiver, a liar, covetous and oppressive. Especially are such complicated sins aggravated, when they are committed deliberately and audaciously, and in full view of their attendant and consequent wickedness.

IV. In the fourth place, sins are aggravated by the *degree of misery which they produce.*

Especially is this true, where the consequent misery is foreseen by the transgressor. All of it may indeed be never foreseen; but enough of it is often foreseen to brand the transgressor with deep infamy. A man may sin in full view of the effects of sin upon his own mind and character. Take, for example, the sin of *covetousness*, and an inordinate love of wealth, and see how it chains down his soul to time and sense; how it leads him to love and serve himself more than the Creator; how it wraps him up in selfishness, and indifference to the concerns of all other beings; how it encroaches upon the principles of honor, equity, and justice; how it blunts the feelings of humanity and compassion, and prevents him from attending to his soul's salvation. A man may sin on purpose to corrupt others by his example; and the moral *effects* of his conduct are no unfair comment upon his wickedness. Take the profane and profligate *parent*, corrupting the thousand streams which he ought to purify, and diffusing poison throughout every department of society. Look at the negligence of that professedly religious family, where the training up of the youthful mind in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is overlooked, and their children are left to the influence of their own wayward passions. Look at the libertine multiplying, wherever he goes, the most revolting scenes of wretchedness, and persisting in indulgencies which hoist the flood-gates of all iniquity. Look at the liar, severing the great bond of union between man and man—destroying all confidence between intelligent beings, and all happy intercourse and relationship, and as far as his influence can extend, throwing this earth into a state of universal anarchy and woe.

V. In the fifth place, sins are aggravated by *the restraints which men break through in order to commit them.*

Men often sin through weakness and infirmity, and through sudden passion and the hurry of temptation; and such sins, though altogether without excuse, are not so deeply criminal as sins which are committed in defiance of sober thought and reflection, and in opposition to powerful restraint. Where men sin in defiance of the restraints of reason, and where they are endued with a vigor of intellect to appreciate those restraints, they are much more guilty than persons of meaner capacity, who commit the same sins. Where persons have enjoyed peculiar advantages for piety and moral virtue; where they have been trained up under the influence of prayer and pious example; where they have seen the reality, and known the power of godliness in others, either in the peace in which they lived, or the hopes in which they died; and notwithstanding this, have become loose in principle, and profligate in practice; they are peculiarly guilty in the sight of God. Where they sin in opposition to warnings and entreaties, their sin is aggravated by every admonition they disregard. Where the providence of God smiles upon them, and his exuberant goodness would lead them to reflection and repentance, and they disregard all these considerations, and become more evil; their iniquity also becomes strongly marked. Where the judgments of God overtake them; where their way is hedged up with thorns; where they are prostrated on beds of sickness, and brought back again to life and mercy from the mouth of the grave; where they have been frequently called to the house of mourning; and

still break through all these preventives to evil, their sin is fearfully presumptuous. Sometimes, also, men are so evil, that they will commit one sin for the purpose of committing another ; or a series of sins, for the purpose of committing a particular sin. They will deceive, and overreach, and lie, and swear falsely, and steal, that they may live in luxury and voluptuousness. And all these are most fearful restraints to break through, in order to commit sin. Whenever men commit any act of wickedness, in opposition to the strong and frequent remonstrances of *conscience*, their guilt is augmented in proportion to the remonstrances that are thus overcome. There are instances of this kind where the sin is peculiarly aggravated. A person may, for example, be tempted to a particular sin, or a particular course of sinning, from which he instantly revolts, and his conscience is horror-stricken at the very thoughts of it. But he gradually becomes familiar with the thought, and it appears less odious. Still he is afraid to commit it ; and the strong arm of conscience holds him back. But in process of time, perhaps of years, conscience becomes wearied ; her voice grows weaker, her arm is palsied ; her faithfulness and courage gone ; and the pertinacious transgressor triumphs. I am disposed to believe that there are very few acts of wickedness in the world greater than such acts as these. You may add to these restraints the expostulations of the Holy Spirit ; and to these you may add solemn resolutions, promises, and vows, all disregarded and broken ; and in these you may see the characters that have "treasured up wrath against the day of wrath." Just in the measure in which men have disregarded, and broken over all that

has been done to restrain and prevent them from sinning, is their sin aggravated and vile.

VI. In the sixth place, the sins of men are aggravated in proportion *to their numbers*.

All wicked men sin constantly. Their minds are probably always active; and therefore they sin, not only as constantly as they act, but as constantly as they think. Their sins are as rapid, and in as constant and thick succession, as their inward emotions. We know there is no cessation in their sinning from the existence of any one holy, or right affection. So that from the nature of the case, their sins very rapidly accumulate, and become greatly aggravated by their numbers. Some persons sin faster and stronger than others, because the operations of their minds are faster and stronger; but other things being equal, they are always greater sinners, as their sins increase in number. Two sins are not so many as three, nor are three so many as twenty; and where they are all equally aggravated, the person who commits the greatest number of sins is the greatest sinner. A child is a great sinner, and has committed a great many sins; but he has not committed so many sins as the youth who has walked according to the course of this world for twenty years. So the man of thirty cannot be so great a sinner as the man of fifty, sixty, or seventy years, unless he has sinned as much faster and as much stronger as to make up for the deficiency in time. There are babes in sin, as there are babes in grace. And there are full-grown men in sin; and there are those who are old in sin—giants in wickedness—whose “hairy scalp” God shall wound, because they “go on still in their trespasses.” Time and years make the way to hell broader and

steeper. The youngest sinner is a debtor to divine justice, and has nothing to pay. But as he grows in years, his debt is running on, and justice is more clamorous and inexorable. Every additional sin adds to the weight and burden of his offences, and to the cry of his abominations that goes up to heaven. I add,

VII. In the last place, one of the greatest aggravations of sin is the *light and knowledge against which it is committed*.

This is the aggravating consideration brought to view in the text. "That servant which *knew* his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." "The servant that *knew not*, and did commit things worthy of stripes," was to be "*beaten*," because there is ill-desert and criminality in sins of ignorance. No man need be ignorant of God's will, because God has given to all less or more of the means of instruction. Yet, those who have little light shall be accountable only for the knowledge they possess. Great knowledge is a dangerous thing, if it be not improved; and greatly aggravates the guilt of the transgressor. "To whom much is given, of them will much be required." It is the universal law of the divine government, that in proportion to the degree in which men have the means of instruction, and are actually acquainted with the will of God, their wickedness becomes more aggravated, more direct and deliberate rebellion, and their punishment will be proportionably more severe. This was what made Paul designate himself as the "chief of sinners." He knew more of God's will than most other, if not than all other men. He had great talents and great privileges, and he made very rapid advances

in knowledge. No man of his times was a greater proficient in the learning of the Jews, or the Gentiles, than he. After his conversion, he had more enlarged and consistent views of God and his truth, and of the doctrines and duties of the Gospel, and of heaven and of hell, than other men. This made him feel the burden of sin. The man who knows what God has done for him in sending his Son to seek and to save that which was lost; the man who knows what the Saviour has done in suffering and dying for his salvation; the man to whom this salvation is offered, and on whom God waits to long-suffering, to accept of his mercy, and who does not accept, but neglects and despises this great salvation; is a very wicked man. The man who has the Bible in his hands; whose place has been allotted to him in the house of God; who has enjoyed the solemn instructions and exhortations of a faithful and earnest ministry; the man who has had line upon line and precept upon precept, who has been urged with plainness and solemnity, and by considerations the best suited to impress the mind of a rational and immortal creature to "flee from the wrath to come," and yet remains in his sins, is a very wicked man. He may not be an idolater, a thief, a murderer, a liar, while he *may* be worse than they. Many an idolater, and thief, and liar, and adulterer, and murderer, who has never heard of the Bible, nor the sanctuary, nor the Saviour of sinners, shall have fewer and less sins to answer for than such a man. "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for him." *Light* is the great thing which aggravates the guilt of men. "This is the condemnation, that *light* has come into the world, and men have loved

darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Men cannot be great sinners, in comparison with others, without great light. Flagitious and scandalous sins, under the direction of a benighted and erring conscience, are not half so ill-deserving as more decent transgressions under the clear and convincing light of the Gospel. Misimproved privileges only aggravate sin. Light and mercy carry nothing but terror to their guilty opposers. Where they are not a savor of life unto life, they are a savor of death unto death. Where they do not make men better, they make them worse. Where they do not sanctify, they desecrate. Where they do not save, they damn. They never leave men as they find them ; but if misimproved, make them tenfold more the children of hell than before.

I might advert to other things which show the aggravations of human iniquity. But I will close the view already given, by the following

REFLECTIONS.

1. We learn from this subject, in the first place, that *it is of great importance that men should have a tender and enlightened conscience.* God has given men a conscience, for the purpose of enabling them to form a just estimate of their own character. One reason why they do not see themselves to be great sinners, is that their conscience is impaired, and the edge of it blunted, and its moral discernment weakened. No man is beyond the reach of a true and just conviction of his own sinfulness, and all its aggravations, so long as he has a conscience. He may stifle conscience for a while ; but he cannot destroy it.

The most thoughtless sinner carries that within him, which is able to discover all his guilt, and destroy all his peace. The boldest and most presumptuous, are not safe from the reproaches of conscience. Nor are the self-righteous and self-deceived. Nor is the man who sins in secret, safe from the eye of conscience. And the longer any of you resist and stifle conscience, the more power will you ultimately give it to disturb your peace, destroy your hopes, and fill you with insupportable anguish and distress.

2. In the second place, does not our subject furnish an *humbling view of all impenitent sinners in Christian lands*? Do not the leading circumstances which impart such aggravation to the sins of men, distinguish the character and conduct of such persons as enjoy the privileges of the Gospel, and yet persist in impenitence? If to do wrong, knowing it to be wrong, greatly aggravates the sin of men, is not your sin, my friends, greatly aggravated? If you know God, and yet you do not glorify him as God; if you acknowledge him as your Creator, your Preserver, your Benefactor, and yet refuse to be devoted to his service; if you know that your iniquity is vile, and that God hates it, and that you ought to hate it, and yet you cleave to your sins, and will not forsake them; do you not make light of sin—mock at it? It is a burden too heavy for any intelligent being to bear; yet you trifle with it. You know that there is but one Saviour, yet you reject him, to the jeopardy of your eternity. You know there is no time for delay in the great business of the soul's salvation; yet you delay. You know that there is no excuse for your impenitence and unbelief; yet are you continually framing excuses. You are in the midst of light and

mercy ; yet your sins are continually increasing. God is lengthening out your days and years of peace and comfort on the earth ; he is continuing to you the smiles of his providence, and the enjoyment of his bounty, so that every place and scene through which you have passed in the world, or where you have dwelt, bears the memorials of his loving kindness ; yet you remain ungrateful and rebellious, and will neither fear him, nor love his Son. Instructions, warnings, counsels, mercies, judgments, all fail to reclaim you, and instead of softening, have only hardened your hearts. Time and opportunity have been lavished and lost upon you, and have only served to render you more inexcusable. You choose the path that leads to death ; you resist the strivings of the Spirit ; you love the vanities of the world, and will go after them ; and though God still calls, you refuse his calls. You might have lived to do good ; but instead of this, you have buried your talent in the earth, and are the means of destroying, rather than saving, the souls of men. And are you not sinners ? Are you not great sinners ? Must you not reproach yourselves ? Must not the time come, when your sins will make a very deep impression on your minds ; when they will fill you with painful reflection ; when they never can be again forgotten ? That day must come. I add,

3. In the third place, how obvious is it from this subject, that *we all need an interest in Jesus Christ !* If Paul could say, "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, *of whom I am chief ;*" it may be that some of us can say it also. It may be that you yourselves feel that you greatly need the pardoning mercy

of God, and an interest in the atoning blood of his Son. Yes, my friends, you have need of just such a Saviour as the Gospel reveals. Nothing but the blood of the great Atonement can cleanse from such sins as yours. If Paul could not find peace with God, except through Jesus Christ; if the best of Christians never have found it except there; where else, suppose ye, it can be found? Believe me, you stand in *great* need of him who came to seek and to save that which *was lost*. You stand in great need of him who came to save the *chief of sinners*. There will be a great company of sinners, and of great sinners saved by the abounding grace of God in Jesus Christ; and you may be saved as well as they. However far you may be from thinking that God has mercy for you, or that his Son suffered and died to save you; if you see your sins, if you see their aggravations, and feel the burden of them, and would indeed have an interest in that holy and precious salvation; then are you the very sinner to whom he this day offers his free redemption. If you are willing to come to Christ just as you are, and here at his cross part with your sins for him and heaven; be assured, he will not cast you out. Great and aggravated as your transgressions are, they are not so great as the exceeding riches of his grace. Let the greatness of your necessity then, be your plea for the greatness of his mercy. Address the throne like one ruined and undone, and say, "Lord, save or I perish!" Flee to the stronghold as prisoners of hope. Flee to the arms of that Saviour, now as ready to welcome you to his bosom, as they were once so willingly stretched on the cross. There is but one sin so aggravated that he

cannot pardon; and that is the sin which contemns offered mercy, and tramples upon Christ and his salvation, to the last. O may God incline your hearts no longer to oppose your own salvation, and to his name be the praise. Amen!

SERMON XV.

CONSCIOUS INTEGRITY A PRESERVATIVE FROM EVIL.

PSALM xxv. 21. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me.

It is a narrow and miserable policy to expect to be the gainers by doing wrong. It shows very little acquaintance with the government of God, and no confidence in God himself, ever to persuade ourselves that it is unsafe to do that which is right, or better, or happier to neglect our duty than to perform it.

It is stated of the Prince of Condé, a zealous Protestant, that having received a message from Charles IX., the King of France, to choose one of three things,—either to attend the mass, or be put to death, or suffer perpetual banishment,—he replied, “The *first*, God helping me, *I never will choose*; but for the other two, I leave it to the choice of the king.” To do right sometimes requires great self-denial, and greater sacrifices than men are willing to make. Reputation, property, the loss of employment, and of places of honor and profit, and the loss of friends, are sometimes jeopardized by unflinching and unblemished integrity. Men, for the most part, sit down and make their calculations in order to ascertain whether it is safer for them to follow the dictates of an enlightened conscience, in the performance of whatever their duty leads them to perform,

or to pursue the opposite course, and leave it undone. Yet we think we shall be borne out in the declaration, that they never injure themselves so much, as when they swerve from the path of strict rectitude and integrity; and never so hazard their influence, their good name, their property, their friends, and the good-will, confidence, and kind offices of their fellow-men, as by a loose and dispirited morality.

It is a beautiful thought of the Psalmist, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me!" If a man cannot be safe in doing what is right, he had better expose himself to danger; because an approving conscience and an approving God, are worth more to him than all the temporary inconvenience and suffering to which he may be subjected for doing what is right. There is, in the long run of human affairs, no such security in the world, as is found in a man's conscious integrity. Be he ever so wise, his superior wisdom and discretion are not half so sure a safeguard as his integrity. Be he ever so rich and honorable, his wealth and station can never throw such a shield about him as his integrity. He is never so much at ease, and never feels that he has so little cause for suspicion and watchfulness, as when he has the high and honest consciousness of personal integrity.

This is a most enviable state of mind. And it is one which may be enjoyed. It is alike attainable by the rich and the poor, by the wise and the unwise, the base and the honorable, seamen and landmen. And it is attainable by a very simple and intelligible way; and that is, by the performance of acknowledged duty. It is this,—this firm integrity, this strong and bold adherence to what is right, that puts a man beyond

the reach of danger. Such a course of conduct may seem to be hazardous ; it may indeed be attended with temporary inconvenience, and even suffering ; yet is it in the end always the safe course,—the only safe course for time and eternity.

But *what is integrity* ? It must be something more than a name, a notion, a fancy. There are very false notions of it in the world ; some men and some nations deem that to be right, which other men, and other nations, deem to be wrong. The maxims of a world that lieth in wickedness, the laws and customs of society ; the usages of merchants and mariners are not always the safe rule of right. There is but one rule, and that is the word of God ; what that requires is right, what that forbids is wrong. This rule is equally applicable to all beings and all worlds, to all nations, all climates, all seas, and all men.

With the Bible in their hands, it is no difficult matter for men to come at the knowledge of what it requires, and what it forbids. A well-informed conscience and an honest heart, will always direct them. I say, a well-informed *conscience*, and an honest *heart* ; for without both of these, they will be very apt to go astray. They never act right in doing that which is contrary to the dictates of their own conscience ; nor, in following the dictates of their conscience, do they act right unless they follow these dictates from an honest and right heart. Conscience may be perverted and biassed ; and there are not wanting instances in which some sin fearfully from the impulse of a misguided conscience. Conscience, in order to be a safe guide, must be under the direction of a right heart, and a right spirit. It is only right-hearted men who can always

trust to their consciences to guide them. Conscience is a stubborn thing, and if under the controlling influence of a wicked heart, is sure to make shipwreck of a man's integrity. It is not a true chart alone that conducts the mariner to his destined port; his compass must be true, and its aim steady and single to the pole. It is not enough that the ship obeys her rudder; her sails must be spread to the wind, and a favorable breeze must blow. A wrong heart is to human life what an adverse current is to the ship's course. She may head her true course, and seem to promise a safe voyage, while a subtle and unobserved current is driving her to the lee-shore. So the *impulse* under which a man acts, the stray current of his own feelings and spirit, are always to be taken into the account when he sits in judgment upon his integrity. When men act from an honest conscience, and a holy Christian spirit, they always act right, and are approved of God.

Such integrity is safe; and, in the final result, it will always be found to be the only true and safe course.

Consider a moment the force and clearness with which this thought is established by *the word of God*. "He that walketh *uprightly*," says the inspired author of the Book of Proverbs, "walketh *surely*." "Thou wilt keep him," says the Prophet, "in *perfect peace*, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." "They that trust in the Lord," says the Psalmist, "shall be as Mount Zion, which *cannot be removed*, but abideth forever." It is the voice of Divine Wisdom which says, "Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall *dwell safely*." And the Apostle Peter, addressing the saints that were scattered abroad in a dark, corrupting, and persecuting age of the world, says to them, "Who is

he that will *harm* you, if ye be *followers of that which is good?*"

Consider, also, that true integrity of character enjoys the favor and protection of Almighty God. Who would not rather have all the world for his enemies, and God Almighty for his friend; than all the world his friends, and God Almighty for his enemy? When Abraham was exposed to trials, and sufferings, and enemies, because of his stern and self-denying integrity, God Almighty said to him, "*Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*" Abraham was not afraid. And who would be, if he could only hear the God of Heaven address him in such language as this? And does he not address every good man in just such language? Does he not say, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth, to show himself *strong* in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him?" He is everywhere present, and his arms are their eternal guard. He instructs us too plainly on this subject to be misunderstood, "He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." He knows the trials to which men are exposed by their integrity; he knows where they are, and when they most need his care. He approves, when others disapprove their conduct; he loves, when others hate and would injure them; and he stands ready to prevent, or remove the evils to which they are exposed. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let them that suffer according to the

will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him, *in well doing*, as to a faithful Creator." If God be for us, who can be against us? The favor and protection of God are enough to counterbalance, if they do not always counteract and prevent, all the evil which his friends may suffer on account of their adherence to his commands. "Fear not them," says the blessed Saviour, "which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him that is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." If we were firm in the faith, that there is a God in heaven who ruleth among the children of men, we should be better satisfied in doing what is right, and leaving the consequences with him. Duty is ours; events are God's.

Look now at the history of good men, and see if, as a matter of fact, they have not been remarkably preserved and blessed for their integrity. Read the history of Noah, when the earth was deluged by the flood; of Lot, when fire from heaven consumed the cities of the plain: of Joseph and Moses, amid the perils of Egypt; of Joshua and Caleb, when the providence of God so interposed, because of their fidelity the whole congregation of Israel were about to stone them with stones; of David, in the family of Saul; of Elijah, defended from the fury of the wicked and cruel Ahab; of Jeremiah, in the dungeon; of Shadrac, Meshach, and Abednego, miraculously rescued from the burning fiery furnace; of Daniel, delivered from the lions' den, and elevated to the highest honors of the proudest of empires; and of

thousands of others of whom the world was not worthy. Good men are a little flock ; but they are cared for by the Shepherd of Israel. Everywhere exposed, they have still been kept as the apple of his eye. They have been like the bush on Horeb, "burning, but not consumed." If they were of the world, the world would love his own ; but because they are chosen out of the world, therefore the world hateth them. Yet they live ; they have been preserved from age to age ; and though opposed more than any other community, they are safe. Their defence is the munition of rocks ; bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure. The church of God is not a favorite with the world. "Mine heritage," says he, "is a speckled bird ; the birds round about her are against her." She has not lived and prospered, because she has found a refuge in arm of flesh. She has had no superiority to boast of ; instead of being superior, she has been few in numbers ; instead of being superior, she has been weak in strength ; the numbers, the power, the learning, the influence of the world, have been against her. Yet God is for her ; and therefore, more are they that are for her, than they that are against her.

There is also a remarkable fact in regard to men of Christian integrity, that speaks volumes in their favor, and in proof of their ultimate security. It is, that after all which wicked men say, and do against them, they possess their respect and esteem. Their character and conduct extorts veneration, even from the worst of men. Their very virtues often tie up the hands of their enemies, and quench their malice. There is a beauty and comeliness in their integrity which command confidence. Men who are dishonest and vicious

themselves, and flee from duty at the first approach of danger, speak of them, and trust them as they do not speak of and trust in others. There is a dignity and power about them which impresses and awes. They may not dazzle, like the glittering pageants of the world ; but they are esteemed, they are held in unrivalled estimation ; and when the laurels of a Cæsar and a Napoleon shall fade, theirs shall be fresh and green, and when the trophies of heroes shall have perished, theirs shall live, and grow brighter even with the wreck of time. Neither the devouring tooth of malice, nor of time, can waste them. They approve themselves to the consciences of men. "When the ear hears them, it blesses them ; and when the eye sees them, it gives witness to them ; because they delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that hath no helper." Men need not be afraid of being honest and true. They shall be the more honored for it, even by their enemies. Their integrity is their security ; and, far more than anything else, tends to disarm the power and insolence of those who would rise up against them, to put to silence the foolishness of wicked men, to recommend the integrity they practise, and convince the world of its reality, its divine origin, and its importance.

There is one strong objection to all that has been said. I hear some of you say, that the integrity of men has not always preserved them. Stephen was stoned ; James and John were beheaded ; the church at Jerusalem was scattered abroad by persecution ; and in every age, good men have, to a greater or less degree, been the sufferers for their piety. Yes, it is so. They have often been *sufferers* for their integrity ; but have they been the *losers* ? What if they do some-

times suffer ; may not their sufferings turn to good account, and may not the time come when they will be abundantly recompensed for them all ? Is it not a truth, that “all things work together for good to them that love God ? and that these light afflictions which are but for a moment, shall work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ?”

Be this, then, one of the maxims of every seaman, “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me !” I have known seamen who were bold and courageous in doing wrong, but who were very fearful and faint-hearted to do right. I have known those whom no ridicule, and no shame, and no reproach could deter from sin, but who were ashamed to do right,—ashamed to stand single and alone when their companions were going to scenes of wickedness,—ashamed to be seen with the Bible in their hands, or in the house of God.

It is most desirable that the character of seamen should be altered, and elevated in this particular, and that they should be *bold for the right*. There is nothing else worth being bold for. The seaman’s character would become a noble character, should it become a virtuous and religious character. They would have vast influence, and of the noblest kind. Nothing would shake their courage, nothing weaken their strength ; and to all wickedness, they would be “terrible as an army with banners.”

“Who art thou then, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if

he were ready to destroy? and *where is* the fury of the oppressor?" Shame on the sailor that is afraid to do his duty on sea, or on land, toward his fellow-men, or toward his Maker! The "east wind shall carry him away, and he departeth. God shall cast upon him and shall not spare. Men shall clap their hands at him, and hiss him out of his place." The fear of man bringeth a snare. Fear God and keep his commandments; yea, I say unto you, *fear him!*

Now to God only wise, be glory and dominion forever. Amen.

SERMON XVI.

DEATH ON BOARD THE SHIP.

ISAIAH **XL**. 6. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry?
All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field.

THIS Sabbath reminds us of a melancholy occurrence on board the ship, during the week that is just past. Our number is diminished. One of the ship's company is missing and gone. He has made his last voyage, and gone to his long home. He was used to being here, and worshipping God with us: but he lies low now, and sleeps in the deep sea. But a little while ago, he had as good a chance of living as any of us; but he is gone, and the place which knew him, knows him no more. No mother's kindness comforted him on the bed of languishing; no mother's hand was there to wipe the cold sweat of death from his brow. He had no relatives to bear him to the quiet grave-yard; no church-bell tolled for him; and there was no consecrated servant of God, to stand by and say, "We commit his body to the dust." It was a seaman's funeral; we were all his kindred, because he was a seaman. He was one of us, and we mourn that he has left us never to return.

What shall I say to you in view of this mournful event? "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What

shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field!"

Seamen are sometimes looked upon as a sort of infidels, or atheists. But it is not so. We see for ourselves, that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." The "sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land." There is no such thing as *chance*, or what we call *accident* in the world. What was not known to us, is known, and *foreknown* to him. What we sometimes call chance, or accident, is but the wise ordering of his providence. We would not be without the consolation of knowing that his hand, though unseen by us, directed all the circumstances that ended in the death of the departed companion of our voyage. "Behold, he taketh away; who can hinder him? who shall say unto him, What doest thou?" The Giver of life is the Preserver of life; and when he no longer preserves it, wherever they are, on the land or on the sea, men must fall under the stroke of death. Every man has "his appointed time" on the earth; his days are measured; there is a limit to them which he cannot pass. Death more commonly comes to men in an unexpected time and way; and this shows us how absolutely our days are in the hands of God. Let us rejoice that it is so; let us rejoice that we have a Father in heaven who watches over us, who cares for us, and who holdeth "our soul in life," as long as it is best for us to live. "The Lord reigneth, and let the earth rejoice!"

Ah! "what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Give him all the world; yet he must die. Fill his coffers with gold and silver;

store his treasure and crowd his warehouses ; give him all that every climate and country can yield ; yet he must die. And it is no trifling matter to die. Who is there that does not think of it with dismay, and to whom the prospect of putrefying in the dark grave, or wasting away amid the waters of the ocean, is not a gloomy prospect ? Yet this is not what makes it so solemn a thing to die. It is because death puts an end to this day of grace, and this space of repentance, and introduces the soul into the immediate presence of its Maker, and to an unalterable eternity. Death ends all the happiness of the wicked, and all the sufferings of the righteous. The body and the soul are then separated, the body to “return to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it.” This will be a delightful interview to a good man ; but to a wicked man it will be awful beyond thought. O who of us is prepared for this solemn event ? Whose account is ready ? Which of us has engaged the Friend of sinners to help him at that great Day, when we appear before a holy God ? What transactions has your faith had with that great Advocate, in order to secure him then to plead your cause ? The great work of life is not yet begun with the man who is not thus prepared to die.

There are no doubt more deaths on the land, than on the sea, because there are not so many who traverse the seas, as live on the land. Yet what an uncounted multitude have died at sea, and found the foaming wave their winding-sheet ! What a mighty sepulchre is the ocean ! Millions upon millions lie strewed over these unfathomable channels ; fleets and armies sleep there ; the young, the brave,—the gallant officer and the hardy mariner, here rest side by side in these vast

valleys, of which the solid land of our globe is but the higher surface. It is not a darker, nor more gloomy receptacle of the dead than the more silent grave-yard ; yet is it a dark and gloomy home. It is a silent dwelling, where men of war are quiet, where the sons of mirth and music are brought low ; where the boisterous tempest and the cannon's roar is not heard ; where man is forgotten, and his name and his memory perish from among the living, and he is heard of no more, until that Day when the sea shall give up its dead.

"All flesh is grass, and the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." Let us not contemplate the death of one of our company without bringing the thought home to our own bosoms, that we ourselves are dying men. "It is *appointed* unto men once to die." The sentence never will be reversed. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return." Just as certainly as we are sinners, and have broken the law of God, we must die. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all sinned." There is no discharge in this war ; we feel the seeds of death within us now ; and though we should live long, and banish the thought of dying from our minds, yet must we harness ourselves for the conflict, and meet this king of terrors,—this last enemy of man. "Man dieth and wasteth away ; yea, man giyeth up the ghost, and where is he ? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down and riseth not : till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

No man is prepared for death, who never thinks of death until it comes. We would have you be prepared

for it ; and that you may be so, would urge you to make your peace with your offended God, through that Saviour who is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." There is but this one way of life, and this one way of being prepared for death. "The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." By his death he conquered death ; so that all who believe in him, and love him, and obey him, shall through him have the victory. He himself invaded the territories of death, and conquered him in his own domains. He was a sojourner with him for a while, but he broke the bondage, and thus became mighty to save. "I," says he, "am the resurrection and the life ; if a man believe in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." What a day will that be, when the same voice of the archangel and trump of God, that shall open the sepulchres of the earth, shall also reach these deeper tombs of the sea, where the proud waters have, for so many ages, closed over the dust of men, and they shall come forth—they that have done good to the resurrection of life, they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation ! Monuments of marble cannot hold them *there* ; these sunken rocks of adamant, washed by the waters of a thousand centuries, cannot hold them *here* ; when his voice thus penetrates the earth, and agitates the ocean.

Dying man ! you may not live ever to witness such another scene ; to weave the shroud, and cast into the sea another of your shipmates. You *yourself* may be the next that shall be committed to this grave of waters. Your name may stand first in death's commission, though you put far away the evil day. You may think

he will come late, but God may send him early. You may not reach the end of your voyage, before the voyage of life is over. Yet, yourself may be the least prepared to die; the least acquainted with God's holy word, the most thoughtless and hardened, the most wicked and profane. You know not when the time of your departure shall come; yet you live as though you would spin out the thread of life to a lengthened old age. There may be but a step between you and death; yet you boast yourself of to-morrow, and instead of being awake and in earnest, in order to be prepared to die, put far away the evil day, as though the thought of it were too painful to be endured. Could your departed shipmate rise up from the bosom of the sea, and once more address you, what would he say? Would he not rebuke you for this thoughtlessness? Would he not tell you, that all that the word of God teaches you of that vast eternity, where his immortal soul now dwells, is sober reality? If he has made a happy exchange of earth for heaven, and is now numbered with those holy and happy beings who have entered into the kingdom of God, to go no more out; would he not say, "O, strive to enter into the straight gate, and come up hither?" And if he died in his sins; if, when death knocked down his earthly tabernacle, and called his trembling spirit away beyond the reach of mercy and of hope, and consigned it to its dreadful doom, never to be relieved, and never to come to an end—would he not beg and beseech you not to do as he has done, and come to that place of torment?

Nothing is more unwise than to expect to live a long time in the present world. It was not made for any one to live in a long while. It is a dying world—the

land of the dying, and not the land of the living. That land of the living stretches far away beyond the horizon of this world. It is a mighty continent that has no horizon and no shore. It has no sun and no sea; earth and sea are there passed away, and the Lord God is the light of it, and the Lamb its glory. Death will introduce you to it, if you are prepared for his coming, and can die in peace. Friends will not weep for you then, as one who lived without God, and died without hope. No one will then say of you, "Good for that man if he had never been born." You yourself will forever bless God that he gave you being, and made you acquainted with his Son. And though his wise providence has not determined your residence on the earth among the rich, or the learned, or the powerful, yet will you remember all the way in which he has led you with eternal thanksgiving and praise. You will magnify him, that his grace could so abound toward the chief of sinners; and though your allotment on the earth has been amid storms and hardship, you will then rest from your labors, and "serve him day and night in his temple." The rest will be the sweeter for all your toil; the sky more tranquil for every storm; the crown the brighter for every cross. Through death and the grave, then, look forward with hope, with delight, to that holy and blessed world, where no want will remain to be supplied, no danger to be averted, no sin to pollute, no sorrow to sadden; where the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and lead you in green pastures and by the still waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes. May God Almighty bless you, and give testimony to the word of his grace, for his name's sake! Amen.

SERMON XVII.

RESTRAINING PRAYER.

JOB xv. 4. And restrainest prayer before God.

THE duties of religion are made up of those we owe to God and our fellow-men. Among those we owe to God, *prayer* holds a place of high and acknowledged importance. God is the hearer of prayer. No man can be a Christian, or can ever become one, who does not seek to become so by prayer. No man who is a Christian already can grow in grace, be encouraged in his duty, strengthened in his hopes, or comforted in his trials, who cannot often say with the Psalmist, "Blessed be God who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me."

Yet what multitudes are there who "restrain prayer before God!" Some pray very irregularly; some seldom pray; some never pray at all.

If we search for the secret cause of restraining prayer, we shall find it in a prayerless heart; if the heart were right, men could no more live without prayer than without their daily bread. They would be irresistibly drawn to the mercy-seat by cords of love; they could not be happy without habitual fellowship with their Father who is in heaven. But there are causes for restraining prayer which are more definite than this general one, and which we shall employ a few moments in specifying.

1. In the first place, there are those who feel that *they do not know how to pray*. They sometimes try, but are discouraged; they have neither the grace of prayer, nor the gift. They cannot give utterance to their requests, and know not indeed what requests to utter. They can speak to their fellow-men, but cannot address the great and holy God. They are shut up whenever they attempt to do so. They are not in the habit of it; it is altogether out of their line of business; and were they to attempt it, it would be such a novelty, that they would be startled at the sound of their own voice. They often take the name of God in vain, but it is very difficult for them to speak of him, or to him, in earnest. They are often heard profanely to call upon God to damn them; but know not how to lift their eyes to heaven, and like the publican in the parable, smite upon their heart and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

2. There are others who restrain prayer, because they are not *satisfied* with their prayers. They cannot make a good prayer, nor pray as well as others. They have not found in their prayers that aliment to a proud and self-righteous heart, which they looked for. Good men also there are, who restrain prayer because they have little or no comfort in the exercise. The spirit of adoption does not always rest upon them, whereby they say, Abba, Father! They cannot always fix their minds upon the duty in which they are employed; nor upon God their portion. Their hearts are sluggish and cold, nor are their desires and affections moved, as they hoped they would be, in fellowship with their Maker. They do not enjoy these strong inducements to prayer, and the devil tempts them, and

they are tempted by their own hearts, to restrain this exercise. The seasons of prayer become insipid and dull ; they have no elevating, or even composing and tranquillizing views of the things that are not seen and eternal, no spiritual joys, and no light in the dark night of their affliction. And they restrain prayer before God, and say in their hearts, "What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?"

3. Some restrain prayer, because their prayers *are not answered*. This appointed means of blessing does not seem to obtain the blessing they seek. The answer fails, or is long delayed, and they have no courage to urge their requests, and "quietly hope, and wait for the salvation of God."

4. Others restrain prayer, because they *are so sensible of their vileness that they are persuaded God will not regard them*. Their sins drive them from God, rather than to God. They are greatly distressed on account of them, and are afraid to pray. *How can such a sinner as I am lift up my face before him? What hope can there be for me? It is mockery, it is insult for such a wretch to pray!* The great Adversary often employs the sins of men, and their own painful sense of sin, thus to keep them away from God.

5. There is also a large class of persons who restrain prayer, because they are *resolved on continuing in sin*. There is great weight in the maxim, "Praying makes men leave off sinning, and sinning makes them leave off praying." The man who is in the habit of prayer cannot pray, even if he deliberately *purposes* to commit any particular sin. If he attempts to go to the throne of grace, and bow his knees before God ; he cannot speak, he dare not pray ; there is a struggle in

his heart, and he must give up his premeditated sin, or give up prayer. "If I regard iniquity in my heart," says the Psalmist, "the Lord will not hear me." The commission, and much more the practice, of the most secret sin, will prove an insurmountable barrier to free access to God. Any idol sin, or cherished lust, which the sinner feels he cannot relinquish, seals the lips of prayer. It is like a corroding, wasting worm, that preys upon the heart, and eats out the desire of prayer. "He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him." I add,

6. Some there are who restrain prayer, because *they are not willing to follow out the spirit of their prayers in those correlative duties which their prayers suggest.* There are duties suggested by their prayers, and obligations implied in them, the neglect of which is flagrantly inconsistent with their prayers. The conscience of a man who prays in his closet, is rarely so torpid, but he is sensible he ought to act up to his prayers, and to live as a man of prayer ought to live. If he does not mean to maintain a reproachless deportment before his fellow-men, he will be embarrassed in his prayers, and will probably restrain them before God. Those who are not willing and desirous to perform every Christian duty, and do not earnestly implore grace to enable them so to do, are rarely brought to their knees. Their prayers would condemn them; they are ashamed to pray. A prayerful spirit will not allow a man to remain quiet under any known sin, or the omission of any known duty. He must give no quarter to his negligence, because his negligence will give him no rest till it is either abandoned and reformed, or roots out all the spirit of prayer.

Such are some of the considerations which lead men to restrain prayer before God.

II. Let us now, in the second place, direct our thoughts to the duty of resisting this unhallowed influence, and of guarding our minds against these, and all other restraints to prayer.

The nature of prayer itself shows that it is a duty, and one which nothing may restrain. It is the dictate of nature, of reason, of conscience, and of piety ; and by restraining it, we violate the strongest obligations. But to spread out this thought over a somewhat wider surface, I remark,

1. In the first place, prayer is a duty *commanded by God*. With all the authority with which he ever addresses men in his word, he says, "I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Elsewhere he says, "Pray without ceasing ;"—"pray with all prayer and supplication in the spirit :—"continue instant in prayer." There is no more weighty, or powerful reason for prayer, than this command of Almighty God. There is, there can be, no excuse for neglect of so plain a duty, and violating so plain a command ; and those who violate it must be self-condemned and speechless.

2. Prayer is necessary *in order to preserve a right state of moral feeling in our own hearts*. Men have no sense of God's being and government ; nor of their own obligations, dependence, and sins ; nor of the divine goodness and mercy, if they never pray. They can never become Christians without prayer. They live without the fear of God, and without his favor. What must be the state of that man's mind who never asks God for anything, and never thanks him for any-

thing ; who never seeks his favor, nor deprecates his wrath.

3. Prayer is *the appointed means of obtaining the greatest and most needed blessings*. God says, "Ask and ye shall receive." The Saviour says, "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he shall give it you." No matter what our condition, or dangers, or wants, or temptations, or trials, we shall never be forsaken of God so long as we truly seek his grace. He gives blessings not a few to men who never pray ; but he withholds more and greater blessings from them because they are not asked for. Do you need an enlightened mind, a tender conscience, and an humble heart ; do you need the pardon of sin, and the influence of his Spirit to quicken and sanctify you ; do you need Heaven's direction from day to day, and from hour to hour, and from moment to moment ; do you need peace and comfort ; do you need a "friend that sticketh closer than a brother," when all earthly friends die ; forget not that no good thing will God withhold from all-powerful prayer.

4. No man is *extensively useful without prayer*. Prayer has wondrous influence in leading men to a useful life. They are very apt to live as they pray. Intercourse with God governs our intercourse with the world, and the men of the world. It gives firmness and decision in opposing what is wrong, in resisting false maxims, and fashionable vices ; while it makes the mind steadfast and immovable in what is right. It wakes up the soul and makes it ready for every good work. No benevolent effort will be constant and vigorous, that is not cherished by prayer ; no zeal burn with a pure and unceasing flame, that is not

kindled and fed at God's altar. Men will not rise above their own selfishness, they will not deny themselves, and give their heart, their time, their influence, their property to doing good, unless they are men of prayer. It is at the mercy-seat that the great impulse is imparted, which is the instrument of conveying great and extended blessings to this guilty world. Prayer is indispensable to prepare the mind to meet the difficulties, contend with the enemies, struggle with the dangers, and survive the discouragements which everywhere oppose the accomplishment of almost every great and good work. Prayer takes hold on Almighty strength, and allies itself with all-conquering grace. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

5. Prayer is *the best and surest antidote to a vain and useless confidence in an arm of flesh*. It is no easy lesson to learn, that all our help must come from God. "Woe unto them who go down to Egypt for help!" "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord his God!" The wisest and best of the human race are worms, and no men. In want and woe, in trouble and in danger, in doubt and perplexity, compared with the Living God, "miserable comforters are they all." "God is our refuge and strength." No matter what our condition, our desires and aims, our plans and efforts, our hopes and fears; "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." A single change in human affairs, a single change in the winds which the God of heaven holds in his fists, may spoil all our hopes in creatures. O how delightful it is to say with the Psalmist, "I will lift up mine eyes beyond the everlasting hills whence cometh my help: my help is in the Lord

who made heaven and earth!" And where do creatures learn this? where do they say this? where do they *feel* it? It is prayer alone that thus leads the soul to God. It is no voice of creatures that can inspire us with hope; it is no created arm, faint and weary, that can give us help in danger, and make our way prosperous. Heaven's own voice alone can say, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer!" Creatures control not our condition and destiny; God can control them by a word. They cannot promise what he promises. Well did he say to the heathen, "Go and call upon your gods, and let them save thee, if they can save thee!" Nothing like prayer teaches us the vanity of all other confidence. Wonders, wonders upon wonders have been done in answer to prayer, when all around us has been full of darkness, and when human helpers have been no better than senseless idols.

6. I remark, in the sixth and last place, *prayer becomes us as dying men, and men who are hasting to the judgment and eternity*. Every man, not excepting the ungodly infidel, feels that he needs the divine presence and favor when he comes to die. Nothing prepares men for death and eternity, who restrain prayer. Let them neglect this appointed means of preparation, and the hour of death proves a sad hour. It is an awful spectacle to see a prayerless man die. But how tranquil the scene, how delightful the view, to see the young, or the old breathe out their departing spirits in

humble and believing prayer! Who would not die in the very act of prayer, and with the very language of prayer on his lips? Men who restrain prayer in life and health, may pray when they come to die, but their prayers will be bitter prayers. They shall call, but God will not answer. To live without prayer, to be wasted by disease, or to be cut off by sudden calamity, —to be swallowed up in the grave without hope,—what a life, what a death, were this! Do not put these solemn reflections far from you, and say that they are gloomy thoughts. They are pensive and gloomy subjects because they are not thought of. Do not say you have no time to think of them; you *must* have time to think of them, because you must have time to die.

“ Stoop down my thoughts that used to rise,
Converse a while with death;
Think how a gasping mortal lies
And pants away his breath.

“ His quivering lip hangs feebly down,
His pulse is faint and few;
Then, speechless, with a doleful groan
He bids the world adieu.

“ But O the soul that never dies!
At once it leaves the clay!
Ye thoughts pursue it where it flies,
And track its wondrous way.

“ Up to the courts where angels dwell,
It mounts triumphing there;
Or devils plunge it down to hell
In infinite despair.

“ And must my body faint and die?
And must my soul remove?
O for some guardian angel nigh,
To bear it safe above!”

The end of the man of prayer is peace. The days of his mourning are ended ; his struggle with sin is over ; he is dismissed from toil, and gone to his rest. They are not unthought of, unpremeditated scenes, on which he enters ; death has but removed the veil, and broken down the dense wall that separated him from the God he loves, and the object of his prayers. He has come home to his Father who is in heaven. His immortal spirit is there a few hours, it may be a few moments, after it leaves its forsaken clay. Angels bear it to Abraham's bosom. And when, from the long sleep of the tomb, he awakes, it is to stand in his presence whose favor and fellowship he so often sought and enjoyed in the present world ; to behold his face in righteousness, whose love, and the light of whose countenance, so often cheered him this side the grave.

It was of men of prayer that the Saviour once said, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." It was to men of prayer that he said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, I will come again and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Ye who are men of prayer, take courage. "Go on your way, till the end be ; for you shall rest, and stand in your lot, at the end of the days." When Jesus shall come with great power and glory, and erect his throne in the clouds ; when the angels shall be sent forth to gather together the men of prayer from the earth and the sea ; you also shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, to be openly acknowledged and acquitted by your Judge, and to enter into his joy.

Ye who cast off fear and restrain prayer, must look

for a different allotment. Remaining as you are, you will die in your sins, make your grave with the wicked, come forth in the resurrection of the unjust, stand at the left hand of your Judge, and hear that melancholy sentence, Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

Which of these two characters, which of these two allotments, will you choose? Which life, which death, which resurrection, which place at the judgment, which allotment for eternity? And forget not this question is to be decided by another; and that is, *Whether you will restrain prayer before God?*

SERMON XVIII.

THE FEAR OF GOD THE GREAT PRESERVATIVE FROM SIN.

NEHEMIAH v. 15. But so did not I, because of the fear of God.

MEN are everywhere, and constantly exposed to do wrong. They are "prone to evil from their youth," and easily led to commit it from the evil disposition which they bring into the world, and carry with them to their latest breath. They are allured to it by the example of others; by the love of pleasure, or of gain; and they are tempted to it by wicked men, and by the devil, the great Seducer.

There are strong and persuasive motives to keep them from sinning; but there is *one* that is more persuasive, and more powerful than all others. The Prophet Nehemiah, who utters the language of the text, was a very learned and great man; he was, too, a very decided and bold man. He does not seem to be afraid of anything; yet was there one thing which no threats and no promises could induce him to do; and that was to sin against God. He was afraid of doing wrong. The *fear of God* ruled his heart, and kept him from evil. In view of a long course of wicked conduct, which was practised by others, he could say with an honest conscience, "So did not I, because of the fear of God."

Was he not a happy man? Would not men always be more happy than they are, if when accused of sin, or sorely tempted, or thinking of the sins of others, they could honestly and thankfully say, "So did not I, because of the fear of God?"

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It is a powerful, and most beautiful principle of conduct, this fear of God. It is something which grows out of love to him, and is strongest in those minds which love him most. Every good man is deeply affected at the thought of incurring the displeasure of God. The happiness of such a man consists in enjoying God's love and favor. He is afraid if God frowns; he cares little who frowns upon him, so long as his Heavenly Father smiles. As perfect love casteth out fear, so pure fear casteth out love. There is a mere tormenting dread of punishment that has no religion in it; it is such a fear of God as the devils have; it is nothing more. Yet is it by no means adverse to the spirit of true piety to fear and tremble before him, who is "able to destroy both soul and body in hell." The Saviour says to his disciples, "Fear him." Many a time have I blessed God for my fears. I am thankful when he "visits my iniquity with the rod, and my transgression with stripes." For my own part, I am glad there is such a place as hell, throwing forth its smoke and its flames, and warning me not to come too near its consuming fires.

If you are duly acquainted with God's greatness and goodness, his justice and mercy, his wrath and his love, his displeasure and his approbation, you will feel that internal reverence and regard for him, which will restrain you from thoughtlessly provoking him to anger. There are no wicked men in the world than those

who care not for God, and pay no just reverence to him before whom angels bow.

Of all the motives to keep men from sinning, the fear of God is the *best and worthiest*. Some persons are kept from sinning from a regard to their own character and reputation; some because their wickedness is too expensive, and they cannot afford it; others because they do not wish to displease and wound those they love; others from the fear of human, and perhaps legal penalties. They may be thankful to be preserved from sin by any motive; they need all these motives to restrain them; yet it is not every motive that is right, and that God approves. There are higher and worthier motives than such as these. The most virtuous minds in the universe do not abstain from sin from such motives; they abstain from it because it is wrong, because it is displeasing to God, and on account of its contrariety to him. The reason why God forbids sin, is, that he hates it; and the reason why he hates it, is that it is wrong, and opposed to his own holy and adorable nature. To be restrained from it by any other motive than that it is displeasing to God, is to be governed by motives that are inferior to that which he requires. This is the highest motive, and the only motive that God approves. It is not sterling virtue to be prevented from sinning from any other motive than such a fear of God.

The fear of God is also the *most effectual* preservative from sin. Those who fear God most, sin the least; did they always fear him, they would never sin. Unless men refrain from it for this reason, there is no certainty that they ever will be prevented from committing it. They will all the while love it at heart; and what

is loving it at heart, but, in the sight of God, committing it! What motive is there, that is *sure* to restrain a man from outward wickedness, so long as he loves it at heart? A cautious regard for his reputation will not restrain him, because he may commit it secretly. A wise reference to his health, or his property, will not restrain him, because some sins do not expose health, and cost nothing. The love of others, and the penalty of the civil law, will not restrain him, because there are sins which do not expose him to these exactions. But he cannot reason thus with regard to God. God is everywhere. He is sure, if he sins, to meet God's frown. The fear of God will restrain him, when nothing else can do it. He may run every other hazard; but he cannot run away from God. He may trifle with every other restraint; but he cannot trifle with God. Take away all fear of God from a creature so prone to sin as man is, and what influence would other motives exert upon him, and how long would they exert it? It were but to let loose the evil passions of men from this single bond, and with an overwhelming tide of wickedness they would be swept down the precipice. Many are the men who would have sinned fearfully in times past, and who would now commit iniquity with greediness, but for the fear of God. "How shall I commit this great wickedness and sin against God!" This single consideration effects what nothing else can. Men are sometimes artful in sinning; but they cannot circumvent their Maker. They are bold, too; they fear not men; but they are afraid of God. The fear of God can restrain. "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand

shall hold me!" These are higher and more effective motives than any which this world can suggest. There is a supreme Governor, an Almighty Father, a righteous Judge.

The fear of God is also the most *universal* preservative from sin. It preserves from every kind and class of sins, and extends its restraints to all places, times, and circumstances. The fear of man will restrain from sins of a certain kind; but the fear of God has a tendency to restrain from sins of every kind. It will restrain not only from outward sins, but from those that are within; not only from sins against man, but from those that are against God. Where the fear of God rules our hearts, we shall have "respect to all his commandments." If our hearts are thus ruled, our lips, our hands, and our feet will be under the same control.

You have known those who were very careful not to commit some particular sins, but quite careless in regard to committing others. Some men are intemperate, who are never dishonest; some are profane, who are never intemperate; some scarcely know how to speak the truth, and yet they are industrious and sober. Now, what these, and such like persons need, in order to make them better men, is the fear of God. They would commit none of these vices, and would practise every virtue, if they feared God.

You have known those, too, who have been addicted to particular sins, become reformed in some respects, without becoming wholly reformed; nay, so far from being reformed, that they have only adopted some new courses of wickedness. The motives under which these persons act are very obvious. One sin interferes with another, and they are obliged to lop it off. There are

sins of youth which are exchanged for the sins of middle life ; and there are sins of middle life, which are exchanged for the sins of old age. Youth keeps them from the sins of age ; age keeps them from the sins of youth ; but the fear of God will preserve them from both. One vocation will preserve them from the sins of another vocation ; but the fear of God will preserve them from the sins of every vocation. Poverty will keep them from some sins, and riches will keep them from others ; but the fear of God will keep them both in poverty and riches. Rank, station, and office may keep them from some sins, and dependence and low condition may keep them from others ; but the fear of God will restrain them in every station of human life. Avarice may restrain them from expensive sins, and prodigality may restrain them from the sins of avarice ; but the fear of God will restrain both the sins of avarice and prodigality. The sea may restrain them from some sins, and the land from others ; but the fear of God will keep them on the land and on the sea. There are motives that will induce men to avoid sins that are scandalous, that will prevent them from being singular in wickedness, that will keep them from gross and degrading iniquity, and that will now and then keep them from all open sins ; but the fear of God will keep them from sins that are applauded, that are sanctioned by custom and example, that are fashionable and splendid. His eyes are upon the ways of men ; he seeth not as man seeth ; he judges through the dark cloud ; no secrecy, no solitude hides from his all-penetrating eye.

In view of the preceding thoughts, there is a loud call

on all of us for *honest self-inspection*. None of us are without sin ; yet should we greatly desire that our sins should be detected and cast out. Some of you may perhaps be satisfied, because you do not take God's name in vain ; some because you are not dishonest ; some because you are not licentious and impure. But can you say, "So do not I, because of the fear of God ?" Is there any sin from which you abstain, on a religious account, and because you fear God ? Of how many evil crimes can you say, I was tempted, but did not yield ; I might, and should have committed great wickedness ; but "so did not I, because of the fear of God !"

Cultivate, then, more and more, an honest conscience. Let not your mind and conscience become defiled, and impaired by sin. Never silence the reproaches of conscience. Whoever else may be ignorant of your wickedness, you yourselves are privy to it. And it is a knowledge that never can be obliterated. A sense of guilt is painful for the time ; but there is no hope of reform, of repentance, of pardon through the blood of Christ, where conscience is not suffered to speak out. When she speaks, listen ; when she smites, bear the blow ; else will the wound never be healed. Plead guilty to her charges, and bear the burden to him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree.

Be careful, too, *to keep your hearts in the fear of God*. "Happy is the man that feareth always." Live in the habitual fear of offending God. We should all be afraid of offending God. We are not safe from sin, from soul-destroying sin, without the fear of God. That life is the happiest life, it is the most cheered life, where God is most feared. "The Lord taketh pleas-

ure in them that fear him, and them that hope in his mercy." Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty, the whole blessedness, the whole and chief end of man.

SERMON XIX.

THE WANDERER RESTORED.

PSALM xxiii. 3. He restoreth my soul : he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

It is remarkably characteristic of the Scriptures, that in their free and abundant use of figurative language, they borrow their imagery from the simplest objects. They do not have recourse to the fine arts, nor to the extended circle of the sciences ; for these are familiar only to the learned ; but, for the most part, they illustrate and impress truth by images borrowed from the appearances and productions that are familiar to common minds.

This twenty-third Psalm furnishes a beautiful illustration of this remark. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures ; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul ; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake." In our reflections upon this clause of the Psalm, *three things* deserve our consideration. Men are wanderers from God : God himself is their Restorer : the evidence of their restoration is the fact, that they are led in the paths of righteousness.

I. Men are wanderers from God.

There are not a few severe and humbling delineations

tions of human apostasy presented in the Bible ; while there are those that are marked by affecting, touching tenderness. "All we," says the Prophet Isaiah, "have gone astray like lost sheep ; we have turned every one to his own way." There is not a good man on earth, nor a redeemed sinner in heaven, but has been brought to this sad confession. "I have gone astray," says the Psalmist, "like a lost sheep ; seek thy servant, for I have not forgotten thy commandments." "My people," saith God, by the mouth of the Prophet Jeremiah, "hath been like lost sheep ; they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place."

Some have indeed wandered farther, and more visibly than others. Some have been restrained from outbreking aberrations, and more aggravated sins, by the power of conscience, by the force of education, by afflictions, and by the strong bonds of society ; but all are wanderers. The time was when they took no delight in God, paid no regard to his authority, and had no thought of their eternal interests. The "green pastures" of his truth and grace had nothing inviting to their corrupted taste ; and the "still waters" where the divine Shepherd would fain lead them, had to them lost all their sweetness. A desert and dry land as it is, this world was their portion ; and here, under its sultry skies and barren sands, heedless of their everlasting good, they sought their joys from the phantoms of earth, and time, and sense.

This spirit of wandering is never effectually cured this side the grave. Within the bosom of every regenerated man, there is still "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." God is not always his chief joy ; there are innate and strong tendencies to

forsake him ; there are backslidings of heart, and many a sad hour when, in bitterness of spirit, he utters the wish, "O that it were with me, as in months past !" His closet is sometimes neglected, or the devotions of it are hurried over and slightly performed. The word of God remains for days and weeks unconsulted, and when consulted, is a sealed book. He forsakes the assemblies of God's people, some idol intrudes itself into his heart, the Tempter intertwines his snares about him, and he falls from his steadfastness. He is a wanderer from the fold. He is houseless and homeless ; he strays amid the dense wilderness ; beetling cliffs confront him, and he trembles on the steep precipice. His retrospect is the retrospect of a wanderer ; throughout his whole course, he gives painful proof that the natural disposition of his heart is to wander from God.

Yet he does not wander fatally, nor beyond recall. He may look to a happy end to his wanderings and his journey, in the Canaan above. The wanderer shall be restored ; for our text assures us,

II. In the second place, that God is the restorer of his people.

"He restoreth my soul." The Psalmist himself had been a good shepherd, and had jeopardized his life for his sheep. He knew the toils and cares of that occupation, and the attention that was necessary, especially in Eastern countries, to the most useful, and, at the same time, most defenceless of all the creatures which God has formed for the service of man. None knew better than he, how to bless God for restoring grace. Who does not need it ? Who will not prize it ? Who does not implore it ?

To restore those who had gone astray, to "call sin-

ners to repentance," is the employment of him who, in the parable of the "lost sheep," is represented as executing the part of the good Shepherd. None return unsought. "The Son of Man came to *seek* as well as to save." It is not the mere note of alarm sounding in the lands where they wander, that reclaims them; nor are they brought back by the mere language of exposition and kindness; these are often heard and repeated, but the wanderer heeds not, because he knows not the voice that invites him. No earthly and no angelic messenger, be his message ever so rich in instruction, ever so terrific, or ever so winning, can persuade him to retrace his steps. "Thus saith the Lord God, behold I, *EVEN I*, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all the places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be. I will feed my flock, and will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their Shepherd."

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed his precious blood."

It is *through* him as the atoning Saviour that men have access to God; it is *to* him as the reigning Saviour, that they look for protection and guidance. His Spirit makes

the message of his truth and grace effective. If you ask his restored flock how, after all their wanderings, they got in the fold; they will all tell you, "I was a child of wrath even as others, a poor, blind, miserable wanderer as ever the God of grace smiled upon. But from being once far off, I have been brought nigh. And I long to tell the world, that it is by the grace of God I am what I am."

The methods of divine grace in restoring his wandering people, are not always such as they themselves anticipate, or would desire. They are affecting lessons which they have to learn, before they are ever sensible of their wandering. It may be that idols which have ensnared them must be taken away. It may be that this world, with all its wealth and honor, its pride and pleasure, is to be obscured and made darker, before the crown of glory shall invite and allure them. It may be that "lover and friend must be put far from them, and their acquaintance into darkness." Obstructions in the path of holiness must be removed, besetting sins must be mortified and crushed, before they will lay aside every weight, and press forward to the mark of the prize of their high calling. God himself interposes, and in ways that bring his hand distinctly to their view, and that constrain them to see and acknowledge that he is displeased, and has a controversy with them. Their heart is lifted up, and he humbles them. They are presumptuous, and he blasts their hopes. They trust to themselves, and he covers them with shame. He knows how to restore them, and by what means, and when to apply those means the most effectually. His power is above their obduracy; his grace abounds even more than their abounding sin. He subdues them

by that grace, and by that grace they are comforted. Not till then, do they return to their forsaken God; but then they do so most willingly. They come back into the fold; and he maketh them to "lie down in green pastures, and leadeth them beside the still waters."

But, in order to put the sincerity of their return to its true and proper test, we are instructed,

III. In the third place, that the evidence of their restoration is the fact, that they are led in the paths of righteousness.

"He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." This is true both of the sinner who is just brought home from his wanderings, and of the saint, who, though once brought home, has wandered, and been brought back. In the experience of every restored wanderer, there is,

1. In the first place, *ingenuous repentance for the past*. There is a thorough conviction of departure from God; of its reality, its inexcusable wickedness, its unspeakable folly, its ruinous tendency. There is ingenuous sorrow on account of it, and abhorrence of it as committed against God, and deep self-loathing for it as in itself vile. There is the spirit of humiliation, of self-abasement before God, and of shame in the wrong done, and for the wrong-doing. There is a resolution henceforth to forsake sin; while there is no purpose of allowance for it in time to come. The sources of godly sorrow are opened by every discovery of pardoning mercy. The restored "remembers, and is confounded, and never opens his mouth any more because of his shame," when the Lord God "is pacified toward him for all that he has done."

2. There is in the second place, a *heartly acquiescence in God's method of restoring and saving the wandering and the lost*. There is a delightful view of that way of recovery, which demonstrates his righteousness, and magnifies his law, through the mediation of that Saviour on whom the Lord hath laid the iniquities of us all. When God set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, he required men to believe in him, and to submit to him as the only Saviour. Whenever the sinner truly returns to God, he renounces his own works as the ground of his justification; he consents to the law that it is holy, just, and good, though it condemns him; he receives Christ as "the end of the law for righteousness." He complies with these self-abasing and humbling terms of the gospel; gives God the throne, and lies at his footstool. Such views of sin and of Christ constitute the very elements of his return, and the first principles of his obedience. These evidences of his restoration.

3. Extend themselves, in the third place, to a *cautious and watchful obedience of the commandments of God*. His faith is but a name, if it do not work by love; "it is dead, being alone." And his repentance is but a painful regret for the past, if it bring not forth "fruits meet for repentance." Without this, all his apparently religious emotions, and all his professions of return, are sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." True piety is not an impulse of momentary tenderness; it is not a flush, or pang of emotion. In returning to the God from whom they have wandered, men obey not impulses, but principles. They are not the suggestions of the

imagination which govern them, but the commandments of God. These are the supreme laws of their religion and their lives. They love to have it so. They desire to honor his name, who has brought them out of darkness into his marvellous light. They are devoted to his service, because they choose him for their Master. They dare to be singular in the view of men, that they may please him and receive his approbation. They do indeed sin; every day they sin; but their purposes are purposes of new obedience. None are more sensible of their infirmity, their weakness, and their exposure than they; but depending on the power of God, they are bold to say, that they mean to go forward in every obvious path of duty. They have no stronger desire than to be led in ways of righteousness, for his name's sake; to make progress in these ways; to walk onward as pilgrims toward the heavenly city, till the Good Shepherd shall house them safely in his celestial fold.

There is one more thought suggested by the text, which deserves consideration. It is,

IV. In the fourth place, the motive and end which God has in view in thus restoring them.

God hath made all things for himself. Everything is to the praise of his glory. "He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness *for his name's sake*." When the often wandering sheep of his fold come to look back, from the boundaries of their heavenly heritage, upon his care and love, they will say, "he hath wrought all for his own name's sake, and not for our righteousness!" It is all from the riches of his grace, and that they might be to the praise of his glory, who hath made them accepted in the Be-

loved. They are not few who will finally be gathered into that heavenly fold ; John saw them “ an exceeding great multitude, which no man can number.” Notwithstanding all their original departures from God, and all their backslidings, when once brought to him, they shall then come in the perfection and beauty of holiness, and be presented a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. A vast and delightful scene of contemplation will then be opened to the view of those who love to think of the ways of God to man. The original design of recovering, and saving such multitudes of frail and sinning men, the several steps by which it was accomplished, its progress, and final completion, will all show forth the “ riches both of the *wisdom and the knowledge* of God !” They will show forth his *power*, who, from creatures thus abject, forms minds that shall “ shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever !” They will show forth *his truth and faithfulness*, which could not be provoked, nor vitiated by all their unfaithfulness. They will show forth his *love and mercy*, always the worker of wonders, now “ glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe !” Well did God say to his ancient people, even in view of lesser mercies, “ Not for your sakes, do I this, O house of Israel, but for my great name’s sake !” And well does he utter the same truth in our ears. Innumerable are our transgressions, grievous is our unfaithfulness. But where we have multiplied offences, God has multiplied pardons. How patiently has he borne with us, restored our souls, and healed our backslidings. Forget not how often he has delivered you from evil, and kept you from falling ; how graciously he has assisted you

in your duty, supported you under sufferings, and brought your trials to a happy issue. Forget not how he has defeated the plots of his and your adversaries to ensnare you ; nor how punctually he has fulfilled his promises ; nor how amply he stands pledged for all that remains to be accomplished in order to secure your final salvation. What he thus performs for his name's sake, is your hope. We have *no* hope but this. Blessed hope it is ! " If God be for us, who can be against us ? " He must have all the praise. His love is everlasting and immutable. He has no desire to change his mind. O let us admire and adore the Lord our Shepherd, and acknowledge our obligations to his matchless grace, and give him all the glory.

In the conclusion of these remarks, let the subject admonish all of *the sin and danger of wandering from God*. It is natural for us, my friends, to " go astray." The natural tendencies of our minds are evil ; they are all on the wrong side ; and though, in varied, and often opposite and contradictory forms, there is a leaning within us to what God has forbidden. Our sources of exposure may not be all alike ; but they are all real, and unless closely watched, they will all be found to have great power. Temptation yielded to, unfits for present duty, and takes away the heart from God. And then, when once the heart is taken away from God, it is prepared for every sin ; and it will be wondrous mercy if we are preserved from perdition. The day of the Lord is at hand. " Take heed to yourselves." Watch and pray. Seek the supply of the Spirit of grace, to mortify every sinful propensity, to regulate every internal desire, to preside over all your conduct, and to keep your heart fixed on God. It is

easier, safer, and happier, more useful and more honorable to yourselves and to God, to live habitually near to him, than it is to return to him when you have once wandered.

Let those, then, who *are now wanderers from the fold of Christ, return to him in this, their day of hope and mercy.* It is a fearful thing to be a wanderer from the fold of God. It is a fearful state of mind, and the way of the wanderer is dark. You cannot lay your hand upon your heart and say you have a clear conscience; nor can you say that you are a happy man, so long as you wander from God. It is a dry and thirsty land where no water is—no living water, no wells of salvation, nothing to satisfy the cravings of the thirsty, perishing soul.

Are there none of you, my friends, who would fain belong to the flock of Christ? Perhaps you feel exiled from it, here on the great ocean. But his flock is found on the sea, as well as on the land. You may sing here as truly as David did on the mountains of Judea, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want; he maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." He is the Good Shepherd, who gave his life for his sheep. To those who follow him, he will give eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand. He gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom. God grant, that when this divine Shepherd houses his flock at the Last Day, you may all be found within his fold!

SERMON XX.

GOD'S CALL REFUSED.

PROVERBS i. 24—31. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: then shall ye call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof: therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

THIS solemn and affecting passage is from the lips of Eternal Wisdom. It is the voice of God heard everywhere,—speaking in public and in private, in the house and by the way, on the land and on the ocean. The persons addressed are *the simple ones, who love simplicity*,—the ignorant, unwary, and careless, who love to continue thoughtless and dissipated, and turn away from all those thoughts which interfere with their present pursuits of pleasure, reputation, or worldly gain. They are the *scorners who delight in their scorning*—those who deride and revile the truths and precepts of the Gospel, and glory in their impiety and unbelief. They are the *fools who hate knowledge*,—persons who have had some acquaintance with religion, whose con-

sciences have been awakened and convinced, but who have broken these bonds, who sin in defiance of these convictions, and set at nought all counsels, and despise all rebuke. The consequences of their folly are here portrayed in glowing and mournful colors. They are the most dreadful calamity and terror;—fear and destruction, like the impetuous and all-prostrating blast of the whirlwind—distress and anguish seizing upon them—every hope and comfort fled—and every helper, human and divine, neglecting and disdaining their distress. The object of this discourse, therefore, is to point out some of the ways in which God thus expostulates with men, and to show that when they disregard his expostulations, they have reason to expect that he in his turn will disregard theirs.

I. I am to point out some of the ways in which God calls the children of men. He calls them,

1. In the first place, *by his Word*. Here, he opens to them the sources of divine instruction, the counsels of his infinite mind, the fountains of eternal Wisdom. Here he reveals to them truths which the lights of nature and reason could never disclose, which angels could not reveal, and which none but God knew. Here he makes them acquainted with the sublimest objects in the universe,—his own infinitely great and divinely glorious character, government, and method of mercy by his well-beloved Son. Here he shows them the rule of duty, and the great end of their existence. Here he uncovers the depth of their moral depravity, and, if possible, the deeper abyss of woe and wrath which await all the impenitent workers of iniquity. Here he supplies the strongest motives which the universe contains, and which his own infinite mind

can suggest, to induce them to hearken to his voice and live. Here he introduces them to the amazing realities beyond the grave; and by all that is conclusive and irreversible in the decisions of the Final Day, all that is elevating and transporting in the condition and joys of God's right hand, and all that is fearful in the agonies and anguish of the soul that is forever exiled from his presence; entreats them to accept his offered mercy. He here spreads before them the map of eternity, the chart of their perilous voyage to that distant and unmeasured country; and puts into their hands a guide, a manual of written instructions, clear, and intelligible, and safe. Throughout all its revelations is diffused the glory of its divine Author, and in every sentence and line his own almighty voice is uttered, as really as it was uttered to our first parents in the garden, or to Moses and the people of Israel on Sinai.

2. God calls them *by his ministers*. Once he called them by the ministry of angels; by his servants the prophets; and by special messengers, raised up and sent forth upon this special errand. For a series of years, he called them by the personal ministry of his Son. On *his* return to the heavenly world, he called them by divinely instituted apostles; and since that period by the ordinary ministers of the Gospel. They are God's ambassadors, and speak in his name. They are his advocates at the bar of the human conscience, intrusted with a concern that interests the well-being of their fellow-men for eternity. They are appointed to argue the cause of God before this thoughtless and revolted world; to present and urge his claims; to *hear the word at his mouth, and warn them from him*.

What the Bible does privately, ministers of the Gospel

do publicly. They illustrate and defend the truth, and press the invitations of their Lord and Master on all *that have ears to hear*. Through them, *Wisdom crieth without, and uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief places of concourse, and in the opening of the gates*. Every Sabbath brings with it privileges which, if improved, would be remembered with joy in heaven. Faithful ministers aim to convey the divine calls directly to the minds of their hearers, and to make them vibrate on their hearts. They endeavor to present the expostulations of God's word in such a light as to constrain men to hear, and understand them, and feel their force. They view the condition of lost sinners, in some measure, as God views it; and feel toward them, in some measure, as God feels; and try all in their power to wake up their attention, to rouse them to a sense of their guilt and danger, to show them the worth of their souls, and with all fidelity and love, to persuade them to flee from the coming wrath.

3. God calls men *by the faithfulness and prayers of Christian friends*. By their parents, who dedicate them to him, and nurture them for his kingdom; who pray with them, and for them, and teach them to pray; who daily bear them to his throne in the arms of faith; and who, by the light of their example and the tenderness of their expostulations, would fain conduct them in the path of life. Friends and associates, too, who have themselves *tasted and seen that the Lord is good*, are often moved by tender compassion for them, and plead with them to turn from the error of their ways. Few, however thoughtless and forbidding, have escaped these affectionate counsels of godly men. There are seasons when the heart of Christian love glows with sympathy,

and burns with the hallowed desire to rescue them from impending danger. *Faithful are the wounds of such a friend*; and many is the bosom where some pliant arrow has been thus lodged, and left a wound, never to be healed but by the balm of redeeming mercy.

4. God calls them also *by the conversion of others*. He often appears to awaken, convince, and convert those who are around them. And when heedless and scornful sinners behold these wonders of the divine mercy; when they see those who but a little while ago were as heedless and scornful as themselves, now solemn and tender,—anxious and prayerful,—agitated and alarmed,—convinced of sin and humbled for their ungrateful disobedience,—returning to God, and casting themselves into the arms of redeeming love,—wiping away their tears and beginning their everlasting song; it is difficult for them to suppress the thought, that it is the call of Heaven's tender mercy to *them*, to "*seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.*"

5. God calls them *by the awakening and convincing influences of his Spirit*. He rouses them from their stupidity; he arrests their attention, and fixes their thoughts on the solemn and effective truths of his word. He lays open their hearts, and makes them feel what they deserve, and what *his* justice requires him to inflict upon them. He takes off the covering from that world of everlasting burnings, to which they are tending, and makes them tremble at every step they take in their guilty career. And in the midst of such scenes, not unfrequently do they feel that God is *bowing his heavens and coming down*, and solemnly and directly inviting and calling *them* to become reconciled to him

through the blood of his Son. Not often does he repeat this call; but when he gives it, though not loud and boisterous, it is distinct and impressive,—it is the voice of God,—the *still small voice*, such as made the prophet wrap his face in his mantle, and bow himself to the ground. I add,

6. God calls them by *affecting providences*. It may be by distinguished mercies; it may be by remarkable deliverances; it may be by some unexpected recovery from sickness; and they feel something within them warmly urging them to repentance. It may be by adverse and afflictive dispensations; by disappointments and losses; by debility, sickness, and suffering; by evil report and good report. It may be by the death of parents, or the death of children, who have been torn from their bosom, and now moulder beneath the clods of the valley. It may be by the admonitory voice of some dying shipmate, with whom they have enjoyed many an hour of gay hilarity, and who is now gone to give up his last account, and peradventure without a ray of hope.

God speaks by such affecting providences as these. He thus proclaims the hopeless character and miserable end of the wicked; the prostration of their plans, and the vanity of all their boasted pleasures and hopes; and exhorts them to stop in a career which so certainly terminates in disappointment and despair. He thus proclaims to them, that this life is frail and perishing; that death and judgment are at the door; that that unknown world of which their departed friends have become the inhabitants, will soon open its mansions for their final reception; and that it is their highest wisdom so to live, as to die the death of the

righteous, and with the sweet hope of a blessed immortality.

Thus does God call upon the sons of men. He instructs, he counsels, he reproves them; he encourages and warns them; he expostulates with them, and urges them to repentance. There is no speech nor language, where his voice is not heard. He calls from heaven and from earth; from the living and the dead; from time and from eternity; from the visible and the invisible world. He calls upon them to turn at his reproof; he stretches out his hand, and invites, and beckons them away from their wonted scenes of folly and death; while all that he utters is solemn, powerful and persuasive, dictated by truth and directed only to their good.

Would to God that these calls were always obeyed. But it is not so. And the melancholy consequence is,

II. THOSE WHO REFUSE TO HEAR WHEN GOD CALLS, HAVE REASON TO EXPECT THAT GOD WILL REFUSE TO HEAR WHEN THEY CRY UNTO HIM.

There are those who refuse to hear when God calls. They are careless and secure in sin, and heed not the voice of their Maker. They take no notice of what he utters. They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear. Or if they hear, they refuse; they reject his counsel with disdain, and turn to him the back and not the face. And what have they reason to expect, but that *God* will refuse to *hear*, when they cry *unto him*. And the

1st Reason for this conclusion is, *that the justice and honor of God imperatively demand it*. It is *right* that the time should come when those should *cry in vain*, who have themselves so long refused. God is

under no obligation to call them at all; and it would have been right, and the just recompense of their iniquity, had he left them without one admonition of their danger, or a single call to repentance. But since he has condescended to call them, if they refuse, it is certainly no injustice, that when *they* call, *he* should not answer.

And especially, when he has called so long and so tenderly, and they have so long and so obstinately refused to hearken to his voice. The most hardened sinners, in the time of their calamity, usually feel their dependence on God, and cry for mercy. And though the time was when he pitied their folly and invited them to the hopes of the Gospel; what now have they reason to expect, but that he will *mock when their fear cometh!* They once ridiculed his counsel; and why now should he not laugh at their calamity? They had no pity when he so affectionately entreated *them*; and why should *his* ear listen, or *his* eye spare, or *his* heart have pity now? Can there be any ground of complaint, if he should treat *them* as they have so often treated *him*? They are not so much greater and better than God, that they may neglect and despise *him*, and yet *he* may never neglect and despise *them*.

Yes, it is *right*, that since they have so long refused, they should cry in vain. And when fear and desolation come upon them, and death and hell stare them in the face, they lift up their trembling voice to God, and God hides his face; their consciences bear testimony that it is right in God to forsake them. They have none to thank but themselves. They are *eating the fruit of their own way, and are filled with their own devices.*

2. It is proper, too, that God *should show what an evil it is, thus to presume on his long suffering.* God

suffers very long with delaying, contending, scoffing men. His long suffering is their only hope. The Apostle says, "*The long suffering of God is salvation:*" that is, there is no salvation without it; and if God did not bear long with men, they must all perish. But it is a very common sin to presume on God's forbearance, and to take occasion from it to sin yet more and more; to become corrupt, and the corrupters of others; and thus ruin their own souls, and the souls of their fellow-men.

It is not only right, therefore, that God should treat such sinners as they treat him, but it is proper, and necessary, that he should show what an evil thing it is thus to presume on his long suffering. It is benevolent and kind to admonish men of the danger of doing this, and of the great evil of thus sinning against God, despising his calls, making light of Christ, rejecting his offered mercy, and hating and disobeying the truth. And now, when the *sinners in Zion are afraid, and fearfulness surprises the hypocrites*, what wonder, since he has borne with them till they filled up the measure of their iniquity, that he should express his displeasure, expose the wickedness of their conduct, and turn a deaf ear to their prayer? Besides,

3. Their *cries do not arise from any regard to God*. Their perplexities and embarrassments have in no respect altered their character. They cry unto God, not because they are drawn by the cords of love. They are rebels, abusers of his goodness, and rejecters and despisers of his Son. Their cries are not the cries of friends, nor children, nor loyal subjects, but of enemies and traitors. Because fear and destruction come upon them, they cringe in vile hypocrisy before the

throne; while they have not one emotion of love to God, one ingenuous pang of sorrow that they have refused and despised him, one honest purpose of obedience should he mitigate the terrors of his wrath. In the midst of all their cries, God sees that their hearts are full of wickedness, and that should his rod be removed, they would return to the same remorseless contempt of him which marked the days of their thoughtlessness and vanity.

You recollect how God reproved and condemned the hypocritical cries of his ancient people, and how he appealed to their consciences whether they could expect to be heard? *When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast UNTO ME, even UNTO ME? Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law. Therefore it came to pass, that as he cried and they would not hear, so they cried and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts. Their cries proceeded from no regard to God. They have not cried unto me with their heart, saith the Lord, when they howled upon their beds. Such is the deceptive character of wicked men. When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongue.*

There is no lifting up of the soul to God in such cries; no humble groanings of the spirit that cannot be uttered, and that enter the ears and penetrate the heart of the hearer of prayer. Far from it. If such sinners would speak out the real feelings of their souls, they would refuse God still; and would set him at defiance in the depth of their adversity, as really as they have done in the height of their pride. But,

4. Those who hear the calls of God, and thus abuse them, *must be destroyed, that the Scriptures may be fulfilled.* It is not the purpose of God to save all mankind. It is an interesting fact, and no truth is more clearly revealed, than that it is not the purpose of God to save all men. The interests of his kingdom require that some should be left to their own infatuated choice of sin and death; should never be reclaimed; and should be set forth as examples of his justice.

Who many of these most signal examples of his justice will be, he has informed us in his word. They will be those who have heard and abused his offers of mercy. He predicted the final perdition of such persons in the text. He predicted this of the cities to which the twelve apostles were sent, and who refused to listen to their message. He predicted this in the parable of the vineyard; in the parable of the sower; in the parable of the marriage supper; in the parable of the ten virgins; and in the parable of the tares. Nothing can give us clearer evidence of this great principle of the divine government, than these and similar predictions. God cannot lie, and he will not alter his mind. Some, therefore, who hear the Gospel and despise it, must be destroyed, that the Scriptures may be fulfilled. Some of them may be brought to repentance, but some must be destroyed.

Heaven and earth may pass away, but God's word shall not pass away. And is there no evidence in this solemn fact, that those who refuse to hear when God calls, have reason to expect that God will refuse to hear when they cry *unto him*? Who shall be left to their own chosen way, if not just such sinners as these? From whom shall God hide his face in trouble, if not

from those who have long heard, and long rejected his calls? I add,

5. *Melancholy facts*, also, prove the position we are endeavoring to illustrate. *God has already refused to hear some who have refused to hear him.* His providence is a comment upon his purposes. Men who refused to hear his voice, *have cried* to him in their distresses; and notwithstanding all his compassions, he has felt himself constrained to turn a deaf ear to their cry.

How frequently have you seen this fact verified in the history of men. In trouble, in want, in sickness, in perils by land and by sea, how many who have neglected God in the seasons of prosperity, have cried to him in vain in the day of their adversity! How often has this mournful fact been verified in the hour of *death*! The bold and profane mariner—early the child of prayer, and early and late refusing the calls of the divine mercy—tossed on the foaming billows, lifts his agonizing cry to God amid the roaring of the storm, but sinks beneath the waves, to come up no more till the sea shall give up its dead.

There lies a man, mouldering in yonder vault, whose youthful conscience was once tender, but who hushed and stifled its voice. Who, when the day of his calamity came, died with the bitter exclamation on his lips, *O how deep! how dark is hell!*

In yonder cemetery lies one, early trained up for God, and who long refused when God called. When his distress and anguish came upon him, he cried mightily unto God; but reason tottered on her throne, and his benighted, abandoned spirit, uttered one shriek of wild dismay, and plunged into eternity.

And there, too, lies the almost forgotten frame of an-

other, over whose time-worn monument the winds of fifty winters have passed ; whose youth was the season of deep religious solicitude, but who set at nought all God's counsel, became abandoned to incorrigible infidelity, and after days and nights of sickness and pain, woe and despair, exclaimed, *O the unutterable horrors of hell and damnation !* and then expired.

Go to that chamber of mourning. There lies the lifeless body of a man whose breasts were but the other day full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow. He who speaks to you was called, in the providence of God, to stand by his pillow. I saw him encountering the pains, and agonies, and strife. I saw dismay and gloom depicted on his countenance. I saw fear come upon him, and desolation driving his hopes away like chaff. Tenderly I asked him, if he had made his peace with God ; and all that he could say was, *Anguish and distress come upon me. God is passing by, and I hear him say, Because I have called, and you have refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and you have not regarded ; therefore I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh !*

There, too, is the living sinner, spared till the measure of his iniquity is almost full,—thrown up, like some shattered hulk, upon the weather-beaten shore, and set forth as a beacon to all that will live ungodly. He grieved the blessed Spirit of God, outlived revival after revival, and now is compassed about by his iniquities, writhing under the agonies of an unappeased conscience ;—trying to lift up his cry, but is repulsed from the throne, and sinks in despondency because God will not hear.

And how many, think you, lie beneath the surface of the earth we inhabit, who, in the hour of their calamity,

cried to God in vain? How many, think you, who refused to hear when God called, have gone to their last account; have stood at the gate of heaven, and cried, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, to whom the King has answered, *I know ye not whence ye are, depart from me, ye that work iniquity?* How many who, like the rich man in the parable, have gone to be tormented in that flame, and to cry for a drop of water to cool their tongue, but from whom the things that belong to their peace are hid forever!

And are none of you, beloved hearers, witnesses of the same mournful truth? Have none of you cried to God without success? Have you not set at nought all his counsel? And now when your fear cometh, when thick darkness settles upon you, when memory brings back your unnumbered transgressions, and conscience lacerates with inward stings; do you not find a cloud over the mercy-seat, so that your prayer cannot pass through? Do you not remember the days when God called, and you would not hear; and does not the withering thought come over you, like the cold blast of the tempest, that now *he* will not hear when you cry unto him?

And now in the conclusion of this discourse, what shall I say? To you, dear hearers, God has called. His word has instructed, encouraged, and admonished you. His ministers have pleaded with you. Your Christian friends have mourned over your impenitence, and entreated you. God has called you by his mercies and by his judgments. And often, too, has his Holy Spirit touched your conscience. He has stretched out his hand all the day long. Even now you live upon his forbearance. But how have you heeded his calls? Have you listened, believed, and felt them? Are not

many of you still unawakened, unconcerned, blind, and deaf, and dead in sin? Are you not despising the riches of his goodness and long-suffering, and setting at nought all his counsel? Testify, ye neglected Sabbaths! say, ye unfrequented closets! speak, thou book of God! proclaim, ye his ministers, his ordinances and his people! and testify, O thou perverted conscience! to the neglect and contempt of these blood-bought privileges.

Well, the withering blast shall one day come. It may be some unexpected season of earthly disappointment,—of deep pensiveness and gloom. It may be the hour of inward terror and remorse. It may be days and nights of restless anxiety, when you feel the burden of past transgressions. It may be when prostrating disease assails, or death invades you, and you feel that, as lost sinners, you are just about to fall into the hands of an angry God. But come it will. And it will be a fearful day. God will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. O, I awfully fear, that many of you, who have long rejected the calls of his mercy, will one day be involved in unutterable anguish and despair. These abused mercies, these lost Sabbaths, these expostulations of God's Spirit, must one day be remembered with bitterness of heart. God is long-suffering and gracious, but not forever. He has drawn a line, which, if the sinner crosses, he goes a step too far. He places himself beyond the reach of mercy, and not a ray of hope shall dawn upon his path forever. The lost spirits of hell *took one step too far*; they trifled with their immortal interests once too often; and when they had taken that fatal step, the die was cast. *You*, dear hearers, may refuse to hear God's call *now*; but it may be once too often. *You*

may procrastinate your repentance, and delay it to a more convenient season ; and when you awake in eternity, you may find, alas ! that you delayed *one day too long* ; that the door is shut, and your destiny sealed forever. Believe me, the day is near, when you will mourn that you refused the guidance of wisdom, and would not choose the fear of the Lord. As the criminal, when arrested by the hand of justice, and about to suffer the demands of law, when he sees his chains, and looks at his scaffold, in vain desires to recall and undo the deeds that have brought him to the block ; so *you*, when the ministers of God's vengeance shall drag you before his bar, will give utterance to the bitter cry, *O how have I hated instruction, and despised reproof !* But it will be too late. Your crimes are proved ; the sentence is past ; the second death must be your portion, and you must weep, and wail, and gnash your teeth. *You* shall call *then*, but it shall be God's turn to disregard your cry ! O how much better to hearken to the voice of God, so that when danger and death assail, you may possess your souls in peace ! How much better to listen to the solicitations of his mercy,—the pleadings of his love,—the entreaties of his Son,—the expostulations of his Spirit,—that when human life is passed away, and you shall have descended to the tomb, you may dwell in safety, and be quiet from the fear of evil ! O how much holier and happier, now to make your peace with God, so that hereafter you shall not be disturbed by apprehension, nor agitated by terror, nor depressed by despondency ; and when the heavens and the earth are convulsed, and the elements melt, and the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God sound, you may glory in the cross of Christ, and triumph in your immortality !

SERMON XXI.

THE NIGHT OF TEARS, AND THE MORNING OF JOY.

PSALM XXX. 5. Weeping may endure for a night; but joy cometh in the morning.

IN the history of every true Christian, there are seasons when he is depressed, and when he is exalted. There are the seasons of his penitence, and the joys of his faith; there is the mourning of his affliction, and the comfort of his deliverance. There is the gloom of death, the night of the grave, and there is victory over the last enemy, the morning of the resurrection, and the glories of eternity.

As a general fact in the government exercised over this fallen world, sorrow is the preliminary to joy; suffering and tears the precursor to the hopes and peace of God's salvation. This fact itself, and the reasons of it, will occupy our thoughts during the present discourse.

I. In the first place, we will advert to some of the particulars which illustrate the fact itself.

Darkness is not that which men naturally delight in. "truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to see the sun." To mourn and be in bitterness, is what no man desires. Yet are these the methods by which the soul is conducted to the light of life, and the joys of God's right hand.

1. There is a quite obvious illustration of this fact *in the conduct of God toward wicked men, before, and at the time they are brought to the knowledge of his Son.* Their night precedes their day ; clouds and storm go before a serene sky ; convictions, more or less deep, sensible distress of mind, and abasing humiliation, ordinarily, if not always, go before a trusting and peaceful confidence in the promises of God. There is often great inward commotion, strong excitement, and heart-rending apprehensions, as when Horeb was rent by the wind, and shook by the earthquake, and encircled by the fire. It is not till after the fire, that there is the "still, small voice ;" and like the trembling, yet comforted prophet, the sinner wraps his face in his mantle, to wonder and adore. God wounds before he heals ; he rends the soul with sharp convictions, and fills it with fears, before he pours into it the balm of heavenly consolation. Men do not always continue in thoughtlessness and unconcern ; they must be awakened and convinced, or they must perish. There are not wanting causes of alarm, when once God holds their thoughts intent, and their eyes waking to just views of their character and condition. The affecting fact, that they are sinners, and condemned by the law of God ; that the punishment to which they are exposed is eternal ; that human life is uncertain, and that it is uncertain how long the Spirit of God will strive with them ; and that it is also uncertain whether they shall ever come to Christ, and find mercy ; are thoughts that fill them with solicitude, and make them fear and tremble. God shuts them in this dark dungeon of doubt and fear, of tumult and solicitude, before he brings them forth to the light of hope. They writhe under worse than Egyptian bondage, flee before

their pursuers, are hedged in by seas and mountains, and conducted through the tedious desert, before they are brought out into a large and wealthy place.

A sense of the divine justice in condemning, always precedes a sense of the divine mercy in saving. Self-despair always goes before all true hope in God. And therefore he throws them into darkness; terrors take hold on them as waters; and out of the depths they cry unto God. They know not what to do, and are tempted to sink in despair.

But man's extremity is God's opportunity. In this valley of Achor he opens a door of hope. Having shown them how ill-deserving they are, he shows them the riches of his grace; and having taught them their helplessness, he himself becomes their helper. The hour of trembling is the hour of deliverance. Light arises to them in the midst of darkness. Conscience is directed to atoning blood. Darkness and gloom are banished. Dejection and despondency are relieved by the light of God's countenance, and the mourning soul wakes to anthems of praise. The light of mercy beams complacently around her, and she begins to breathe the atmosphere of heaven. It was but just now, that "deep called unto deep at the noise of God's water spouts, and all his waves and billows went over them;" now all is tranquil as the summer sky. The burden of sin is gone; fears do not agitate; sweet and heavenly influences come down upon the soul; "weeping endures for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

2. A second illustration of this fact is found in the *varied experience of the people of God*. Men not only thus begin their religious course, but pursue it thus, in all these alternations of darkness and light, weep-

ing and joy. It is a law of the divine kingdom, that "he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The experience of God's people shows nothing more clearly, than that he abases them before he lifts them up. He does not always listen to the first cry of distress; nor does he always heal the anguish of the soul at the earliest indications of its lowliness; but waits to prove and bring out its self-abasement, ere he says to it, as he did to the Syro-Phœnician suppliant, "O, woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt!"

There is not one condition of forgiveness and hope for impenitent men, and another and easier for the people of God. Their consolations are premature who rejoice before they mourn. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." If there is any class of men for whom it is befitting to blush and be ashamed to lift up their faces before God, and to indulge in the bitterest and most penitential grief; they are those who have left their first love, violated their vows as Christians, and from their high standing as the professed people of God, have fallen into sin. Well may they grieve as no others grieve; nor were it irrational for them to expect to walk in darkness. All experience shows that when they wander and are restored, it is a thorny way, and the path is wet with tears. Their inward distress, their depression and despondency, are not unfrequently such as they never experienced, even in those dark hours which immediately preceded their first reconciliation to God. And as light followed the darkness then, and weeping was the prelude to joy; so it is now. Neither the grief nor the joy may be tumultuous, yet they may be genuine and

true. There is deep feeling in the silence of the soul. Those sorrows are the most pungent, that are most unutterable; those joys the most transporting that cannot be told. And the vividness of the joy is very apt to bear some proportion to the intensity of the grief. The early dawn is most joyfully greeted after the darkest and most terrific night; the green earth is most beautiful when we come unexpectedly upon it, in the midst of the desert. Delightful truth! "a man shall be an hiding-place from the storm, a covert from the tempest, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, and as rivers of water in a dry place." When his people think of God and are troubled; when they go forward, but he is not there; backward, but they cannot perceive him; on the right hand, where he doth work, but they cannot behold him; and he hideth himself on the left hand that they cannot see him;" how welcome is the light of his countenance which then breaks through the cloud, and in what accents of tenderness and love does the promise come home to their bosoms, "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee!" Seasons of darkness may try our faith, but they do not justify despair. "It is good for a man that he both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God." We are often cast down, perplexed, and desponding; but it is that we may have more than our wonted peace and joy, and again "sing as in the days of our youth." "For the Lord will not cast off forever; for though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." Our hopes may be cut down, and wither as the green herb; but one look of love from him revives them. He "breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax."

They are bastards and not sons, who never weep. God dealeth with his people as with children. "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my heart is troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

3. A third illustration of the fact asserted in the text, is found in *the history of the Church in all her progress through this unfriendly world*. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." The trials and conflicts of the Church of God in the earth, have ever been followed by spiritual peace and prosperity. For much the greater part of the time since the first apostasy, he has suffered her to be opposed, diminished, disheartened. But nothing has been more strongly marked in her history, than that after such seasons of depression, his own right hand has been plucked out of his bosom, and made visible in raising her from this low estate. We know not to how low an estate she may be reduced; but a very low and languishing state of the church is one of the tokens that God is about to arise and plead his own cause. Such a state calls for his interposition; and he is wont to prepare her for his gracious presence by first leading her to deep repentance and godly sorrow. She is covered with sackcloth and sits in ashes. "She putteth her mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope." "Her eye affecteth her heart, because of all the daughters of her city. Her eye runneth down with tears, till the Lord look down and behold from heaven." God has more usually chosen such seasons as the most proper ones for the exhibition of his gracious power

and sovereignty, and for the revival, and sustenance, and triumph of the cause that seemed desperate in the eyes of men, and beyond the power of man to uphold. The deepest darkness has been the harbinger of day. The harp that has been hung upon the willows, has subsequently been attuned to the Lord's song. He has turned the captivity of Zion, and their mouth was filled with laughter and their tongue with singing. "When the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifteth up a standard against him." When her foes begin to triumph, Zion begins to hope; for the day of her deliverance draws nigh. It is time for him to work when men make void his law. The chill, bleak winter is then past, the Sun of righteousness pours his rays upon the long barren herbage, and songs of salvation break from lips that but just now uttered the lamentations of despondency. Such is the fact adverted to in the text. We pass,

II. In the second place, not so much to *consider*, as barely to *enumerate* the reasons of it.

These reasons are obvious and revealed; they commend themselves to our own minds.

1. One of them is, that men *may have just views of God's hatred of their sins, and learn to humble themselves under his mighty hand*. This alone is a sufficient reason for their travelling through gloom and darkness to the mount of rejoicing. "*Humble yourself*," says the apostle, "under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." It is not the "due time" to exalt them till they are humbled. God dwells with the humble and contrite, "to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." He adds no needless burden to the

heaviness of a broken spirit ; but he bends not to the unbroken and resolute offender, nor does he comfort the sinner in his unrelenting rebellion. "He will speak peace to his *mourners*." The whispers of his love are reserved for those who tremble at his feet. Allied to this, there is,

2. A second reason for such dispensations. *Men themselves are not in a fit state of mind to receive peace and comfort until they are brought thus low.* They cannot welcome his paternal tenderness and mercy till then. They do not seek it, they do not desire it till then. His consolations would find no access to their minds, but would be resisted and repulsed. Great struggles are necessary to great relief. It is the agitated heart that is prepared to listen to the composing voice of heavenly mercy.

3. A third reason is, that without this discipline, the *soul never casts itself on the infinite mercy of God the Saviour.* These inward troubles, these fruitless efforts of self-righteous men, and these vain reliances, which meet with such sad defeat, are designed to make men feel the need of something to rest upon that is without themselves, and above all created helpers. They must be driven from every other refuge, before they commit themselves to him who alone is mighty to save. Not until they feel the sting of the deadly serpent, will they look to him who was lifted up on the cross. They are not willing to let go their hold of all other helpers, until it is violently broken off. Then they let go, and fall into the arms of sovereign mercy. All the teachings of divine truth would fain lead the mind to this refuge and resort ; all the dealings of divine providence have this same uniform tendency. **Men**

learn only by experience, that every other way is hedged up with thorns, passes under the terrors of the burning mount, and hangs over the angry precipice. They must be driven from every other refuge, and tossed by the tempest, before they will repair to him who is a refuge from the storm. Some are led by milder ways than others, but all are led through the darkness and the deep.

4. Another reason for this fact is, that, *when peace and joy are thus obtained, they are more thankfully appreciated.* When the night of weeping is past, there is a glow of joy which could not be felt but for the weeping. The restored can then scarcely contain themselves for joy. Their heart overflows, their face is the brighter for having been darkened with grief and furrowed with tears. The man who was lame from his mother's womb, and was healed at the gate of the Temple by Peter and John, as soon as he found his feet and ankle bones received strength, could scarcely contain himself for joy. Relief to the anxious sinner is like a spring of life and salvation in the desert. The promises of God are then realized to be "exceeding great and precious promises." Christ is a precious Christ. The Eternal God is then the sinner's refuge, and underneath him are the everlasting arms.

5. There is one more reason for this fact, and that is, that *the subjects of this painful discipline may thereby learn the more fully to give God all the glory of their relief.* This is the greatest reason of all. A drowning man thinks of his deliverer. He thinks of the rope that was thrown out to him, and that broke as he took hold of it; and of the life-boat that was swamped in the surge; but more than all, of him who plunged into the

foaming billow, and brought him to the shore. The sinner was a drowning man. No human arm was strong enough to rescue him from the fatal current that was sweeping him to destruction. And when he was rescued, it was in a way that made him see and feel that God alone was his deliverer. And now his grateful song is, "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but to thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake!" The scenes he has passed through will never be forgotten, and they lead him to give God the glory. He is slow of heart to do this, without just such discipline. His trials are the very way and method by which God brings him to right views on this important subject. He needs them all to free him of that strange delusion, "Mine own arm hath done this!" God will save men by himself alone, or leave them to perish. He alone must have *all* the glory of their salvation, or they shall never join the song of his redeemed.

Review these truths, then, my friends, and apply them to yourselves. Think of them, ye who are thoughtless in sin. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" If the people of God mourn before they rejoice, beware lest your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness.

Think of them, ye who are not thoughtless. It is not certain that you will become Christians, even though you are serious. You may not be willing to travel through the darkness and the deep. You may lose all solemnity, and go back to the world. Beware that none of you do this. Be not afraid of anxiety, nor of darkness, nor of tears. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. If they be

tears of godly sorrow, despair will give place to hope, turmoil to peace, grief to joy. You shall live to praise him, and abundantly to utter the memory of his great mercy.

If any of you are Christians, and in mourning, you will see better days. "Your light shall yet break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily." Unto the upright there ariseth light in the midst of the darkness. Weeping will not endure always; the morning of joy shall break upon these dark mountains; and your song shall be the sweeter for all the darkness and the deep through which God has led you.

SERMON XXII.

ROOM ENOUGH YET.

LUKE xiv. 22. And yet there is room.

ALL may come to Christ, and be saved, who will. No man, or angel, may shut the door of hope, or bid any poor sinner go away.

We are told in the chapter which contains the text, that "a certain man made a great supper, and bade many." At supper time, "he sent his servant to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready." But they would not come. And what did the master of the feast do, but bid the messenger "go out immediately into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind." He went and brought them in, and then came back and said, "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, *and yet there is room.*"

The *feast* referred to, means the provision God has made in the Gospel for the salvation of men. The *Messenger* employed to carry the invitation at supper time, denotes his Son. The *conduct* of those who would not come, represents the conduct of all those who hear and reject this gracious invitation. The message to the lanes and streets of the city, denotes the carrying of the Gospel to those who had been at first overlooked. And the declaration of the Messen-

ger, that, after these were invited and had come to the feast, there *was room enough yet*, was designed to show that there is yet room for all to come who will.

This is true, my friends, and a delightful truth it is. There is yet room.

1. In the first place, *in God's infinite mercy*. This is a fountain that never fails, an ocean that is always full. It is like God's eternity and immensity, no one can measure it. It is high as heaven, deep as hell; the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. We can no more dive into the heart of God, and explore the boundless depths of his infinite mercy, than we can sound eternity itself. We have no line long enough, and no sins heavy enough to do this. It has poured forth unsearchable riches, but never can they be poured out in such full measure, as that there shall not be unsearchable riches of mercy remaining. "His mercy endureth forever." It is no marvel, that those who measure God's mercies by their own, think that they are limited and shortened. But in nothing is short-sighted man more at fault, than in such unworthy notions of God. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask, or think."

2. In the second place, there is room *in the great Atonement made by the death of Christ*. It is not wonderful that the sinner is afraid lest divine *justice* should shut the door against him. The law of God, and his own conscience, naturally create and sustain this terrible fear. It is but justice, it is but equity, that he should perish. And he must have perished, but for the death of Christ, dying in the sinner's place, and suffering the wrath of God, the just for the unjust. Justice is so entirely satisfied by this great Propitiation, that

whosoever will may come. Their supper is prepared ; there is bread enough, and to spare ; there is wine and milk, without money and without price. None are excluded from its divinely commissioned offers ; none are discouraged from accepting them ; none are embarrassed ; not a soul need perish, so long as there is this city of refuge. " Look unto me," says that adorable Saviour, " and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else." He has enough for all. " Him that cometh to me," says he, " I will in no wise cast out."

3. There is yet room *in the household of faith*. Enough there are who know not God ; the household of faith imbodyes but a small part of those who will finally be saved. It is God's purpose that this family of his Son shall be greatly increased, and hereafter fill the earth. Happy, indeed, are those who are already brought into it ; for they have " a name better than that of sons and daughters." But this divine family claims no monopoly of privileges. Those who are within, are no hindrance to those who are without. The church of God opens her doors to all who wish to enter in ; her arms and her heart are extended to men of every age, and rank, and condition ; nor is she ever more gratified, than when the weary and heavy-laden direct their feet to her temples, and in crowds come to her solemn feasts. She looks with interest on seamen—on those whose calling separates them so much from her holy hill ; and longs for the time to come when " the abundance of the seas shall be converted unto God," and many a wandering and houseless mariner shall sit down at her feast of mercy. She is even now sending forth her servants to compel them to come in. The

"Bride" says, Come. No matter who, no matter how many; there is enough for them—enough of pardon, peace, joy, and heaven.

4. This leads me to remark, in the fourth place, *there is yet room in the heavenly world*. There are "many mansions" there; and other sheep that are not yet gathered that must be brought into the fold. There the "many sons;" the "nations of the saved;" the "innumerable company;" the "many who shall come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South," are yet to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. The numbers are not yet completed; nor will the complement be made up, until myriads upon myriads more are brought home to that glorious world. Its gates are never shut, night nor day. O yes, there is a place in that upper Sanctuary for more *of you*—a robe of righteousness, a harp of gold, an everlasting song. There is yet room for you at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

"There your seats are now prepared,
There your kingdom and reward."

5. There is room, in the fifth place, *in the opportunities and means of grace and salvation*. None in Christian lands are shut out from these privileges, unless they exclude themselves. Sometimes God gives men over to a reprobate mind, and curses their very blessings, and makes them a savor of death unto death. But who shall limit the Holy One of Israel, or set bounds to his forbearance and long-suffering? There is a state of mind that solicits depression. Men sometimes get so deeply into the snares of the devil, that they come to the conclusion that their day of grace is past, and that

there is nothing left for them but to despair and die. There is mercy for others, there is room for others, in Jesus and in heaven, but none for them! But who is it that says this? Has God said it? Has the Saviour said it? Has the Holy Spirit anywhere recorded it? No: it is the devil who says it; it is the father of lies who says it. It may be that the best and most hopeful season of repentance is gone by; the bright morning may be past, and clouds may be gathering over their evening sky. And it may be, too, that these their very fears indicate the striving of God's Spirit, and show that their day of grace is even now most rich in promise. I would not dare to say, there is one among all the *living* who may not seek and find. Late repentance may not be genuine; but genuine repentance is never too late. The vilest may say, *Who can tell*, if there may not be hope even for *me*? There was for the dying thief; who can tell if not for *me*? Who can tell even amid the hour of great darkness, "if God will not turn, and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger?" I have known instances not a few, in which persons had supposed the door of mercy fast shut and barred against them, who actually found it wide open. And I hesitate not to say, that the most desperate transgressor this side eternal burnings, does but add to his wickedness by yielding to the temptation that he is beyond the reach of the divine forbearance.

I may add,

6. In the sixth place, there is yet room, *notwithstanding the multitudes who have already become partakers of this great salvation*. Jews and Gentiles have been gathered in, but yet there is room. The sick and the poor, the bond and the free, the learned and the igno-

rant, the refined and the vulgar, the moral and the immoral, men of every name and calling, on land and sea, have been gathered in; and yet there is room. The Gospel has had great success in our world; it has had free course; it has found its way to the palaces of kings, and fruits have been harvested from the highways and hedges, and from among the halt, the lame, and the blind; it has travelled almost from pole to pole, and from the rising of the sun to his going down; and yet is there room. From every generation that has been born, multitudes have come in, and God's house has rejoiced in the accession of her numbers, strength, and graces. From the harvest of nineteen centuries, what sheaves have been brought into the garner of the great Husbandman! And yet there is room.

There is room, my friends, for *you*—for every one of you, without distinction and without exception. Your parents have been gathered in, but there is room *for you*. Your friends, your companions, have been gathered in, but there is room *for you*. In defiance of your sins, your temptations, your calling, your fears, your delay, there is room *for you*. Jesus' work is not done on the earth; time has not sealed up your account; even now, after so long a period of folly, the Spirit of God invites you to repent and believe the Gospel.

Our commission extends to *you*; it is to bring you in, whoever you are. It is to constrain, to compel you, by the power of God's truth, by the plenitude of his love, by the tenderness of his compassion, by the bloody agonies of his cross, by the provisions of his table, by his crown of righteousness.

Can I not move you? O if you are not made of brass; if you cannot dwell with everlasting fire and in-

habit eternal burnings, come while it is called to-day, and while there is room for you. What is it you are waiting for? You are needy; you are miserable and perishing sinners; what more do you need in order to feel that you have the warrant to come to Jesus? You are expressly invited: will you not come in, that his house may be filled?

We read in the Scriptures that "they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was *shut*." There will be no room for you then, however much you may wish to enter. "He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth," will shut to the door, and you shall stand without and say, Lord, Lord, open to us—open to us! It will be a fearful thing then to be shut out—shut out from God—shut out from all that is holy and lovely in the universe—shut out from heaven and shut up in hell, with malignant devils and the lost spirits of wicked men—lost because they are wicked, and then the more wicked, because they are themselves to be lost and damned forever. It will do you no good to believe there is no such place as hell; this belief will not help you to escape it, nor to enter into heaven. It may, on the other hand, shut you out of heaven, and shut you up in hell forever. Rather believe there is a Saviour, and that he welcomes you to his arms and to his heart; rather believe there is such a place as heaven, and that now its doors are open, and you may enter in.

SERMON XXIII.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN PROLONGING HUMAN LIFE.

PSALM xci. 16. With long life will I satisfy him.

COULD the temporal blessings of the world all be collected together and enjoyed by one man, his own single life would outweigh them all. "All that a man hath will he give for his life," is a truth, though uttered by the father of lies. There may be instances in which human life is perverted and abused; while this misapplication of the gift is no impeachment of the bounty of the Giver. And if life itself is a proof of the divine goodness, so is the continuance of life. It is a renewal of the gift itself, and a prolonged expression of the same divine goodness which first gave it. The text is the language of *promise*; and the blessing of life is the greatest of earthly blessings. "With *long life* will I satisfy him." The subject of the present discourse, therefore, is THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN PROLONGING HUMAN LIFE. This thought may be illustrated,

I. By the *instinctive love of life which is found in every human bosom*.

The love of life is one of the last principles in our nature, if not the last, that is ever subdued. There is a natural antipathy in man to the separation of the soul and the body. Every man feels it. Dissevered from the light, and hopes, and influences of Christianity,

there is no event so dark and gloomy. To the living, it is an untried event ; no one has ever returned from that struggle to tell us what is meant by a conflict with the last enemy. We irresistibly throw around it all the images of fearfulness and desolation, and even of sickening horror. That corporeal frame, once so beautiful and fair, now a mass of loathsome corruption ; that body so fearfully and wonderfully made, now so worn, wearied, sickened, decayed, that the active and impatient spirit can no longer use it, reads a melancholy lesson. Yet in spite of ourselves, we feel that the sentence of the Almighty Judge has placed us in this state of awful condemnation. That life of consciousness, reason and immortality, takes the alarm, and inquires, What will that perpetual hereafter be, to which I am destined ? These bonds which have united me to earth, when once severed, will they be superseded by other and higher sympathies ; and these relationships, so extended and strengthened by time, and so tender and joyous, will they all expire ? It is not in man to contemplate the great event which decides these questions, without solicitude : and few there are who contemplate it with so little apprehension, that they do not deem it a privilege to contemplate it at a distance.

Death removes from us *all the objects and concerns* of this world. Whatever they are, or have been, at that solemn hour they pass from us, in a moment. Our time of trial, whether it have been long or short, and whatever be our character, or the issues of the trial, is then closed. The righteous, from that day onward, will have no more darkness, nor doubt, nor fear ; the wicked, from that day onward, will be driven away in

their wickedness, from every prospect of good, from every means of grace, and every gleam of hope, and enter upon their unalterable eternity. There is goodness, great goodness in God in prolonging the life which he has given.

II. In the second place, this thought may be illustrated by the special care and providence of God, by which human life is prolonged.

One man does not live longer than another, as a matter of course. There are no laws of nature, or of his own physical, or intellectual constitution, by which the life of any one is necessarily prolonged an hour. Men die at every stage of life, from infancy to old age. There is not a greater diversity of age in the congregations of the living, than is to be found in the great congregation of the dead. It is impossible to predict how long the aged will live, or how soon the young may die. It is no uncommon thing for the weak, the sickly, and the frail, to survive the strong, the healthy, and the vigorous. "One dieth in his full strength, living wholly at ease, and quiet. Another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure." Men die everywhere ; from every station, every office, every employment, every sorrow and every joy. Death reigns over the palace, and the cottage ; at the festive board, and in the house of prayer ; amid the toils of men, and amid their amusements ; in the house, and by the way ; on the land, and on the sea ; by unexpected casualty, and by gradually approaching disease ; by the elements, and by the sword ; by the malignant hands of enemies, and by the mistaken kindness of a friend. Folly and sin do not shield them from the stroke ; nor are they protected by their wisdom and

piety. Talent and usefulness afford them no security ; nor are any so obscure and useless that death does not search them out. "We see that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish." The "mighty man, and the man of war, the judge and the prophet, the prudent and the ancient, the captain of fifty and the honorable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator," are equally liable to finish their course, and lie down in the dust. "Thou carriest them away as with a flood." Human life is like the rapid passage of an impetuous torrent. It passes, and is gone. It is like a dream—a night of undisturbed slumber, from which, when we awake, the time passed in it appears as a cipher. It is like the grass which groweth up ; in the morning it flourisheth, and in the evening it is cut down and withered, and all its beauty, health and vigor are turned again to the earth. It is like a lighted candle ; it will soon burn away, and go out of itself ; while at any moment, it may be extinguished by a breath of air, or a few particles of moisture. Nay, it is like a vapor,—a thing of air,—a fluid floating in the atmosphere,—a smoke which the wind driveth away,—the most unsubstantial, fleeting, and transitory thing in the world.

Great care is necessary, therefore, on the part of God, to cherish and prolong such a frail existence as this, and amid so many and constant exposures. If prolonged at all, it is by interpositions strongly marked with divine watchfulness and benignity. We need not be so much surprised to see men *die*, as to see that they are *kept* from dying. The wonder is not, that so many die *so soon*, as that, under the sentence of death, and in such a world, and amid so many exposures, any

should live *so long*. Multitudes have been *as it were dying* for a series of years, and still they live. Multitudes, who, in the *judgment of their fellow-men*, long since bore all the marks of premature death, have lived to see those marks obliterated, and now give all the indications of prolonged years. Multitudes who, from year to year, have *themselves* looked for an early grave, have found their melancholy apprehensions defeated, and are yet in the land of the living. Who that hears me cannot look back upon expressions of restoring, or preserving mercy, by which he has been snatched from the grave? From how many perilous events have you but just made your escape? In how many different departments of human life, in how many scenes of unexpected danger, have you been kept as the apple of God's eye? Not few are those periods in the history of almost every man, in which, to human view, there was little to hope, and everything to fear, and from which he has been mercifully rescued. Who does not see, in a multitude of instances, that nothing but the hand of God has kept him from the grave? Our times and seasons are all in his hand. Nothing is more obvious than his goodness in prolonging the life of man. But I remark,

III. This thought may be illustrated, in the third place, by contrasting the divine goodness in prolonging human life, with the divine sovereignty in taking it away.

God takes away the life of man, as well as gives, and prolongs it. His sovereignty in cutting short the lives of men, calls for cordial and unreserved submission; while his goodness in prolonging them, calls for adoring gratitude. "We live, while others are dead," is a

thought very often upon the lips of men ; but it is one which furnishes affecting proof of the divine goodness. *Why* is it that some live, while others die ? Are the living wiser, better, holier, or more useful than the wise, and good, and useful who have gone to their last earthly rest ? Have they any stronger hold on life ? Have they a better title to it, and would God have done them any injustice, had he spared the dead, and cut off the living ? Are they the wicked, and the vicious, and vile only that have died ; or are the wicked, and vicious, and vile still among the living ? There are those who have lived to see whole generations die. They stand almost alone amidst a younger race, and talk only of the events of other times, and of men who flourished before the rising, and risen generations had existence. They have lived to see the changes which the current of time has made in this transitory world. And who hath thus made the living to differ from the dead ? What arm has restrained the ruthless axe of time from *them*, which has been laying millions low ? There is but one answer to these questions. The difference is to be attributed to the unmerited, and sovereign favor of God. No reason can be found for it elsewhere. It is an expression of the divine goodness and mercy ; and it is one among those extra-dispensations, those rare expressions of divine goodness, to account for which, we must have recourse to the will of God, and ascribe all to him. There is no chance or accident here ; and there is something more than natural causes : it is the hand of God.

IV. A fourth consideration, in illustration of this thought, is, that in prolonging the lives of men, God gives them time and opportunity for repentance.

The soul is the most important, the all-important part of man. There are seasons when, in contemplating the divine care over human life, we are constrained to demand with the Psalmist, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him!" Nor are the reasons of this wondrous condescension hidden from us. This vapory, evanescent thing, which we call human life, is the envelope which wraps up an immaterial and immortal existence; and in thus watchfully protecting it, the God of mercy has an ulterior regard to the soul. He guards the frail casket, for the sake of the jewel which it contains; he encamps around the threatened and tottering tenement, from regard to the immortal tenant who occupies it. He views men, not only in the light in which they now appear, and as inhabitants of time, but in the light in which they will appear in future ages, and as inhabitants of eternity.

Man is fallen by his iniquity, and under the wrath and curse of God. Yet, through Jesus Christ, is there for him a way of pardon and eternal life. The world he occupies is the prison of hope. The short term of human life is the only day of grace and space for repentance. Within this period are compressed all the offers of mercy, all the instructions of the Bible and the Sabbath; all the warnings of divine providence, all the strivings, and all the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit; all the solemnity, and tenderness, and prayer, by which men are led to the knowledge of themselves and the great Redeemer, and all the instances of repentance that ever take place among fallen men. These are all ended, and there is no instance of repentance when once human life is come to

a close. It is the wildest delusion to look for an opportunity of making our peace with God beyond the grave. Up to the very eleventh hour, there is hope. The day of grace is not closed, the space for repentance is not over, the door of mercy is not forever shut until the last breath is gone that expels the soul from the worn-out house of her earthly tabernacle. Not a few do indeed abuse this truth, and defer the work of their salvation until the hour of death, and perish for their presumption. But it is still a truth, and one which has led some of our race truly to repent and believe in the Son of God, at a very late period of their earthly existence.

How, then, does the divine goodness shine in sparing the forfeited lives of men, prolonging their dwelling upon earth, and lengthening out the day of their merciful visitation! How many are now in heaven, who would never have entered there, had not God in mercy permitted them to live twenty years, instead of ten; or forty, instead of twenty! How many in our guilty world would have died in their sins, if they had died the last year! How many, even, in this small congregation, would have perished without hope, if they had died during their last voyage! How many of us should have now been lifting our eyes in torment, had we died twenty, or ten, or five years ago! "The long-suffering of God is salvation." His goodness in prolonging human life is as great as the multitude of his pardons; as great as the worth of the soul; as great as the perdition from which it delivers; as great as the heaven it bestows. "Millions of money," exclaimed an agonized and dying Queen, "for a *moment* of time!" A year, a month, a week, a day, a single

hour added to the fleeting period of human life, may be, and often is, the turning point for eternity.

V. I remark, in the fifth place, the divine goodness in prolonging human life, appears in the consequent graces and hopes of his own people.

God prolongs the life of his own people, and often interposes to snatch them from the grave, for the most benevolent and gracious purposes. There are, indeed, not a few of them who have such clear evidence of their adoption into the divine family, that they are conscious that they have more to gain than to lose by leaving the present world. Yet how many good men are to be found, who, as they were sinking under the power of disease, and as death seemed to be coming up into their chambers, have expressed such sentiments as these: "God has taken me by surprise. Though I have hopes, precious hopes, yet is it a dark hour. I had hoped to be better fitted for heaven than I am; and if it be his blessed will, I have still a desire to live." When curtained by all the tenderness and solemnity of the bed of death, good men feel that it is a deeply solemn thing to leave the present world, and enter upon the unchanging allotments of the future. Not unfrequently they tremble as they approach the grave; and you may hear them pleading in the language of the Psalmist, "Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like the moth. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry: hold not thy peace at my tears; for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no

more!" They would live, and examine their hearts afresh, and know more satisfactorily that all will be well with them. They may hope to die safely, and yet feel that they have barely religion enough to furnish some of the fainter marks of God's children. They would not go forth to meet the Bridegroom without trimming their lamps afresh. The thought distresses them to die so unprepared. Sometimes, they fear they have some sins unrepented of, and the forgiveness of which they have not found so sealed by the blood of sprinkling as they desire. They would be more holy, more weaned from the world, and more attached to God and heaven; and thus die more in peace, and more to the honor of God and true religion. And in thus prolonging the lives of his people, who does not gratefully recognize God's goodness? I add,

VI. In the sixth place, the divine goodness in prolonging human life is evinced by the fact, that his benevolent purposes toward our world are, for the most part, accomplished through the agency of living men.

Some of these are accomplished, it is true, through the instrumentality of mere physical and irresponsible causes; but most of them, and those the most important, are accomplished through the agency of moral causes, or men. Some of them are accomplished through the agency of men, after they are dead; because men live by their influence and actions, long after they sleep in the dust. But the most of them are accomplished through living men; men whose existence is prolonged in order to secure these great ends.

The lives of men are lengthened out, not more for their own benefit, than for the benefit of others. We

are prone to overlook the purpose, as well as the hand of God, in prolonging human life. Just so long as men, in any department of human life, be it ever so exalted, or ever so debased, have anything to do for God, and can be employed in accomplishing his purposes, he lengthens out their days. He will take care that not one shall be called to his grave, before his allotted work is done. He will watch over all their course, and continue to them the time and opportunity of fulfilling all his counsel, until all the wise and benevolent designs which he purposes to execute by their instrumentality, are accomplished.

This is an expression of great goodness on the part of God. Men sometimes sink into the grave without having apparently accomplished anything worth living for. Good men often see life wearing away, and the opportunity of usefulness just about to be circumscribed by the narrow limits of the tomb; and it covers them with shame that they should have lived to so little purpose, and done so little for a redeemed church and a ruined world. They know the value of human life, and are grateful for the goodness that still lengthens it out. In this view of the divine goodness in prolonging life, its trials and sorrows can scarcely have a place. Those there are whom God spares, both *to do* and *suffer* his will; and when they both do and suffer it as they ought, though their race is lengthened out, it is but to enhance their prize; though the conflict may be severe, it is to brighten their crown; and though it be to augment their toil and sorrow, it is also to enlarge their reward. That will be the happiest and most honored man in heaven, who has been the holiest, and lived the longest, and done and suffered the most for

God in the present world. There is nothing, therefore, equivocal in the proofs of the divine goodness in prolonging human life.

The preceding thoughts suggest the following reflections :—

1. In the first place, they enforce *the importance of employing human life for the great purposes for which it is given and prolonged*. We may all wonder, and with an admiration that is full of holy gratitude, that we have not long since been cut down as cumberers of the ground. And if we would not bury all grateful remembrance of his goodness in the grave of a forgetful heart ; let us show that we appreciate it by devoting the life he has prolonged to his service and glory. After all that God has done to watch over and protect these frail and exposed lives, it were a thankless return to devote them to sin and the world. Days there have been when some of you foresaw the approach of evil ; when you feared that your earthly career was coming to a close ; but heavenly mercy interposed for your deliverance, and rescued you from the grave. You will not forget those days, nor your own undisclosed thoughts and expressed purposes in regard to the future, should you be permitted to live. And have you paid the vows which your soul made in the time of trouble ? Or have those solemn reflections passed away, to be renewed and revived in tenfold bitterness, when the day of calamity shall come on afresh ? God spares you, but it is only for a little while. What you do, must be done quickly, for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor device in the grave whither you are hastening. God can lay you aside whenever he is pleased to do so. You may not be satisfied with liv-

ing, and you cannot be reconciled to dying, unless you faithfully employ life while it lasts. You will find it a pleasure to live, so long as "for you to live is Christ;" and when this building of flesh shall begin to shake, you will find, that those for whom it is Christ to live, to die is gain.

2. In the second and last place, *since the goodness of God is so manifest in prolonging human life, how great is the guilt, and how fearful must be the misery, of those who derive no benefit from it when thus prolonged?* Notwithstanding all the divine goodness in giving them existence in the present world, and in continuing the existence he gave; in furnishing them so many rich and favorable opportunities to make that existence a blessing to others and themselves; in instructing and warning them, and in keeping back the sword of the Destroyer, year after year; still they have lived in vain, and worse than in vain. It was said of Judas, "Better for that man, had he never been born!" And it may be said with truth of every man who lives and dies in his sins. Such men abuse the divine forbearance and long-suffering, to their souls' undoing. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." God has given some of you, beloved hearers, great and long-continued opportunities for repentance, in order that your life and day of grace may be a blessing. But are there none among you, whose abuse of his goodness and forbearance give strong indications, that these blessings may be converted into a curse? If you die in sin, as you have lived in sin, how may you hope to come off with a lighter doom than is reserved for those who, "after

their hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God!" There is nothing of which you may be more solemnly assured, that that God "waits that he may be gracious." His tenderness never speaks out more truly than when he says, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim! how shall I deliver thee, Israel! How shall I make thee as Admah! how shall I set thee as Zeboim! Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together!" But if you pervert this divine clemency to presumption, and abuse the goodness which thus prolongs your day of grace to impenitence and sin; better had it been for you not to have lived out half your days. God will destroy you, but not until the measure of your iniquity is full. Woe,—woe betide the man on whom the vials of his wrath will be poured out, because he thus hardens himself against God, and bids defiance to the fears and hopes of eternity! And "what wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?" The universe will have visible evidence that such a man deserves the woes he feels.

SERMON XXIV.

TRUE AND FALSE REPENTANCE.

PSALM li. 3. For I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. And

MATTHEW xxvii. 3. Then Judas which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.

I HAVE thrown these two passages together, because, thus considered, they furnish a clear exemplification, both of a *true and false repentance*. When Peter, on the day of Pentecost, exhorted the multitude of the Jews to forsake their errors and sins, and turn to God, he gave them this summary direction : “ *Repent*, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.” When our Lord himself would declare, in the briefest manner, the revealed condition of eternal life, he told the people who heard him, “ Except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise perish.” His forerunner also, “ came preaching the baptism of *repentance*, saying, *Repent ye*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” In the Old Testament, also, we find the same comprehensive injunction ; for the prophet thus exhorts ancient Israel : “ *Repent*, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions ; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.” Thus, when the ministers of the everlasting Gospel, under either dispensation, have fulfilled their commission, “ they

have gone forth everywhere preaching that men should repent."

A duty so solemnly and frequently enjoined, deserves our serious attention, and we are interested to know in what it consists. It is implicitly recognized as a compend of the Christian graces, while the joys of heaven, and the sorrows of hell, are suspended upon the performance or neglect of it.

Yet all repentance is not true repentance. An apostle declares, that "*godly sorrow* worketh repentance not to be repented of; but the *sorrow of the world* worketh death." There is, therefore, a repentance that needs to be repented of, and which is not unto salvation. Instances of both these we may expect to find in our acquaintance with men, and especially in Scripture history. Accordingly, we are furnished with specimens of both in the word of God. We shall occupy ourselves, in this discourse, in placing two of these side by side, and as we proceed with the comparison, we may hope to discern and fix in our minds some characteristics of evangelical repentance, that shall distinguish it from all counterfeit and spurious similitudes. The instances selected are those of David and Judas, both of which are strongly marked, and in our exposition of which, we place ourselves under the guidance of an infallible interpreter of the actions, and expositor of the spirits of men. We propose to show wherein their repentance was alike, and wherein it differed.

I. We shall show wherein the repentance of David and Judas was alike.

It appeared alike, and was alike in many particulars.

1. In the first place, we remark that both David and

Judas *were sorry for their sin*. They both indulged in sincere grief on account of their iniquity. They had deep impressions of its turpitude and heinousness; they saw its evil consequences to themselves and others, and truly regretted what they had done. Though the sorrow of the one was godly sorrow, and that of the other the sorrow which worketh death; yet they were both sorry. In view of their base conduct, the emotions of both, though from causes radically and essentially diverse, were, in their outward expression, alike. No one who reads David's penitent acknowledgment of his sin in the 51st Psalm, can doubt the sincerity or depth of his regret; and as little question can exist in the other case, since the inspired historian declares, "Then Judas, which betrayed Christ, when he saw that he was condemned, *repented himself*." Nor is this mere form of expression all. His convictions of his sin, and his grief, were so intense and overwhelming, that he preferred death by his own hand, with all its attendant horrors, and all its fearful issues, to the sorrow and agony which consumed him. He could not live in such distress; and if this be not evidence of the reality and depth of his grief, then we know not where to look in any case, for proof of this frame of mind.

2. In the second place, both David and Judas *confessed their sin*. Hear the Psalmist: "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest." He prays to be delivered from "blood guiltiness," and professes to offer the sacrifice of a "broken and contrite heart." Equally explicit is the confession of Judas. "*I have*

sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." Many a sinner is so thoughtless and unconcerned, as rarely to admit the conviction of his guilt; and multitudes, who are convinced of it, satisfy themselves with the acknowledgment of their offences to God only. But these offenders confessed their sins to men. David did to Nathan, and to God's Israel; and left his confession on the public records of his nation, for the benefit of the church, and the instruction of men in every age. And we have seen how public and open was the acknowledgment of Judas. In both cases, there was a frankness of confession that puts those who make it above the suspicion of artifice, or concealment. They seek for no extenuation of their guilt. They hide no circumstance that exhibits its aggravation. All is open and candid, like the plain dealing of men who felt the stings of conscience, and were willing to be confounded before God and man.

3. In the third place, both David and Judas *endeavored to make some recompense for the wrong they had done*. After the shameful fall of the King of Israel, and his acknowledgment to Nathan of his transgression, he renounced his guilty course of conduct, and repaired the injury as far as was in his power. He raised the deluded partner of his crime to the highest rank in his kingdom, and Solomon, her son, became, by the express appointment of the king, the heir of his possessions and crown.

Scarcely less explicit is the proof that Judas was actuated by a desire to make some recompense for the wrong, of which he had been the guilty perpetrator. When he saw that Christ was actually condemned, he was seized with consternation, and hastened to the

chief priests, accusing himself, and declaring the innocence of the man he had delivered into their hands. He was eager to exculpate the condemned Saviour, though in doing so he accused himself. And he tested the sincerity of his renunciation, by bringing the price of his treachery, and casting it down before those who had corrupted him. Though his ruling passion was the love of money, another affection now became stronger and predominant. He made restitution of his ill-gotten gain, and as far as might be, labored to counteract the tendency of his sin.

In these three particulars, there was a similarity between the repentance of David and Judas. They resembled each other externally, and in a degree, also, in their spirit and temper. The conduct of both was, to a certain extent, the conduct of true penitents; and but for subsequent events, and the light which inspiration has shed upon their character and doom, men might have inferred that there was no real difference in their repentance. And yet we know that the repentance of the one was true, and the other false. Let us then,

II. In the second place, attend to some particulars in which their repentance differed.

In some of their features, they were certainly alike. But if to the eye of man there was a resemblance, God saw a difference. One he blessed with a sweet sense of his pardoning mercy; the other he abandoned to the horrors of despair; and when the measure of his iniquity was full, consigned him "to his own place." There was a point where they began to diverge, and because they separated here, the barrier which divides the friends of God from his enemies, is placed between

them forever. In noticing some of the points in which they differed, we may remark,

1. In the first place, the repentance of these two transgressors differed *in the motives from which it originated*. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." The difference in their repentance lies in the *heart and spirit*, which gave rise to it. David's arose from his love and fear of God. Repentance that flows not from the love of God, is always spurious; and though while a man is destitute of love to God, he may be sorry that he has provoked his displeasure, he cannot be at heart grieved that he has disobeyed and dishonored a Being whom he hates. True repentance consists in that self-loathing and self-abasement for sin, which arises from an affectionate regard to the excellence and goodness of the divine character. "I have heard of thee, says Job, by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee;" wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

David's heart was tender, as well as filled with anguish. He had lost his enmity and opposition to God, and was deeply affected and humbled, because he had dishonored the Holy One of Israel. "Against *thee*, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight!" He was not insensible to the injury he had done to others; but in his view, the chief aggravation of his offence was, that it was committed against God. In this aspect of it, every other feature was well-nigh forgotten. He could not help repenting, with such views and feelings as he had toward God. It was his affectionate regard for God that led him to hate his sins, and to say, "Because I have done this evil in *thy* sight, thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and

clear when thou judgest." There is not a single selfish and mercenary motive suggested throughout the whole of the Psalm which records his humble confession. Does he speak of the divine judgments ; he says he deserves them. Does he speak of Zion, whose interests he had put in jeopardy, his request is, that God "would do good to Zion, and build the walls of Jerusalem." Does he ask to be restored to the joys of God's salvation ; it is that he may "teach transgressors his ways, and that sinners may be converted unto him." Does he beg that God would remove his frown, and once more open his lips ; it is that "his mouth may show forth his praise." This is a repentance altogether above the horrors of a guilty conscience, and those inward restraints, and checks, and agitations, which force a man to confess his sins, and simply convince and cover him with shame.

But not one thought of all this is to be found in the repentance of Judas. It sprung from no such motives. However bitterly he grieved, it was wholly on his own account. He was agitated ; he trembled ; he cast about him for some relief ; conscience made him honest ; but he had not one truly humble emotion. In the very act of confessing his sin, and seeking some relief from the terrible reproaches of his own mind, he endeavored, by a deed of desperation, to break away from the government of the Most High. The motives of his repentance were all corrupt.

2. In the second place, the repentance of David *was accompanied with saving faith* ; while that of Judas *was an unbelieving repentance*. The offending Psalmist knew that a Saviour had been promised for lost men ; and that the guilty, however odious and ill-

deserving, might find pardon and peace through him. Though but obscurely revealed, yet was this way of salvation by the Messiah to come, indicated by the worship and ceremonial observances of the Jewish religion. None under the ancient economy had a more clear and lively view of the Redeemer's character and worth than David; and none more certainly trusted in the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and appropriated by faith the benefits of that blood that was expiatory and not ceremonial, and that was designed to "take away sin." After confessing and bewailing his transgression, he says, "Purge me with hysop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Gbd required the Hebrews, when they came out of Egypt, to take a bunch of hysop, to dip it in the blood of the paschal lamb, and with it to sprinkle the lintel and the two side-posts of their doors. It was ~~in~~ an allusion to this rite, and other emblematical uses of the hysop in sacrifices, that this penitent sought for pardon in the words we have just recited; and, while uttering them, looked away from the sign to the thing signified, and exercised saving faith in him whom these types and shadows prefigured. That such were his views is farther manifest, when he says, "For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering." He knew there was but one sacrifice that could meet the claims of offended justice. The faith of his broken and contrite heart, rested on the great sacrifice of God's appointment. His contrition was associated with a saving faith in him who is David's Lord and Son. He had acknowledged the justice of the law; and with that acknowledgment, confided in the grace of the Gospel. He felt his need

of the Saviour, because he felt that he was lost and justly condemned. His heart was prepared to depend on Christ alone for pardon and acceptance in the sight of God ; and his conduct was such as to show that the repentance that is unto life, is the repentance of a believing mind.

No such faith accompanied the repentance of Judas. He had better opportunities than were enjoyed by David, of a perfect acquaintance with the character and work of Christ. He was a member of the Apostolic family, and in frequent attendance upon the person of Christ in his progress through Judea. He heard him preach, and saw his miracles. He was with him at the last Passover, and enjoyed the best opportunity of testing his claims, and knowing the value of his redemption. He had seen multitudes believe in him, and rejoice to the saving of their souls. And now, when his sins were set in order before him, and he was bowed down under the burden, and knew that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin ; and was under stronger inducements than ever to cast himself, as his poor, guilty, wretched betrayer, at his feet, and trust in him who could pray even for his murderers ; his suspicious heart, the more suspicious and distrustful because so guilty, turned away from him in cold and sullen unbelief. Though trembling on the threshold of eternity, he could not trust and live. His repentance was the repentance of a mind that had no confidence in this friend of miserable sinners. Had there been super-added to his deep convictions and anguish, the least degree of believing confidence in that atoning sacrifice about to be offered up, he had never gone into eternity with hands stained with the Redeemer's blood and his

own. Had he but the faith to cry with the dying thief on the cross, "Lord, remember me," notwithstanding all I have done, "remember *me* when thou comest into thy kingdom," it never would have been said of him, "It were better for that man if he had never been born."

3. In the third place, an essential element in the repentance of David was *hope*; while the repentance of Judas was the repentance of *despair*. Hope is a sweet exercise of Christian piety, and delightfully honorable to God and the riches of his grace, through his Son. All the exercises of David in this Psalm, are full of hope. He could not despair of mercy from God, so excellent is his loving kindness, and so great his mercy toward them that fear him. Love, penitence, faith, and hope, are graces that belong to one and the same family, and fruits of the Spirit that grow on the same parent stock. Where one is found, the other is not far distant; and if hope does not always bloom and flourish amid the tears of repentance, it is watered by them, and its bud of promise cherished by every contrite sigh. Where faith looks to God's adorable Son, hope is sure to rest on him, if not at once, ultimately, and with triumph. Hence, in this very Psalm of deepest penitence, we read of looked for "joy and gladness"—of "lips that show forth God's praise"—and of "sacrifices of righteousness, with which God is well pleased." Though the hope of pardon is not a bribe to godly sorrow, it is sooner, or later, the fruit of it. No man can long be the subject of the one, without being the subject of the other. There is that healing influence in the blood of Christ, which, when it binds up the broken heart, bids the mourner rejoice. Welcome as is the light of the morning after a night

of apprehension and distress,—welcome as a secure haven to the worn-out and tempest-driven mariner,—welcome as a full pardon sent from the throne of royal mercy to cheer the dungeon of the condemned criminal looking forward to the hour of his execution,—*so welcome* are the tidings of salvation to the breast that is burdened with sin, and whose gushing sorrows flow at the cross. The mercy of God, in Christ, is never estimated but by the true penitent. Nor is there any true penitent that will not embrace the divine mercy, and give God the praise. The sorrow that “worketh repentance to *salvation*,” is a compound of fear and hope, of agitation and tranquillity, of distress and mourning for sin, and confidence in the promise of peace. From darkness it emerges into light; from groaning under bondage, it rejoices in the liberty of the sons of God; from lamentations and mourning, it “sings aloud of God’s righteousness.”

But the repentance of Judas was of another sort. It was the dreadful, fiend-like repentance, of despair. It was the sorrow which worketh death—the death of the body and the death of the soul. It was guilt unrelieved by hope, and it was repentance that impelled him to perdition. It was not the melancholy of a disordered mind—it was the heavy, fixed, and obdurate gloom of a well-balanced and artful mind, and yet a mind at war with God and man—with time and eternity! It *could not* be comforted, even by a Saviour’s love; it could not be cheered, even by the brightness of God’s countenance; it could not be obviated by a salvation adapted to its deepest woes. That salvation had enlightened the judgment, and convinced the conscience, even of this accursed traitor to his Lord; but it could not carry

his heart, nor subdue it into one tender emotion, nor turn it away from its sullen despair.

We have thus seen wherein the repentance of David and Judas were alike, and wherein they were not alike. A few brief remarks will now close our discourse.

1. We learn from our subject, that the *best means of grace and salvation may fail of fitting men for heaven*. David enjoyed the best means of grace and salvation which were furnished to the age in which he lived; and they exerted their proper effect upon his mind and character, and fitted him for God's right hand. But Judas enjoyed still better means, and richer instructions, while his own sinful heart grew more sinful and obdurate under them; and thus abused and perverted, they only fitted him for perdition. The tendency of the *instructions* he heard, the miracles he saw, and the perfect example of which he was the witness while in the family of Christ, was to make him a holy man, as they did the other eleven disciples; but the constant tendency of his own *deceitful and corrupt mind*, under this powerful influence, was to wax worse and worse. In the earlier part of his career, and till near the close of it, he maintained a fair external character, lived apparently like a sincere follower of Christ, and had the confidence of his fellow-disciples. But mammon was his god; and in the process of time, his selfish and corrupt heart showed itself, and broke over all the restraints and religious instructions with which he was favored. The longer he heard Christ preach, and saw his works, the more his enmity rose against him; till at length "his iniquity found him out," and his hatred to Jesus rose to such a height, that he betrayed him with a kiss, delivered him over to his crucifiers, and thus

showed that in the enjoyment of the highest privileges, he became a "vessel of wrath fitted to destruction." And thus it often proves with the best means of grace. While they have a good effect upon some, they only serve to increase the wickedness of others. They have fitted multitudes for heaven; but they have also fitted multitudes for hell. They have this effect in every age, and in every place. "We are unto God," saith an apostle, "a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life."

2. Our subject presents us an affecting view of *the sovereignty of God in the discriminations of his grace*. In the few traits of character to which our thoughts have been directed, we see two professors of religion making the same avowal of their attachment to God and his cause. The one was a sincere friend of God, and the other a base and detestable hypocrite, and concealing a foul and malignant heart under the cloak of a fair profession. We see them both guilty of foul and abominable crimes; but we see one recovered, and restored, and penitent, and the other impenitent, and a final apostate. We see one subdued and weeping at the cross, and comforted by returning holiness, peace, and joy; and the other smitten with remorse and horror, for which the grave was the only relief. We see one influenced to lay hold of eternal life, and the other left to his own unrestricted course, and fulfilling the prediction that was made concerning him centuries before he was born. We see one the child of mercy, the other what the Saviour himself designated him, "the son of perdition."

And in all this do we not see the sovereignty of the divine counsels, and the discriminations of that grace that maketh one to differ from another? Why was David subdued by the grace of God, and Judas left to impenitence and wrath? We see these discriminations everywhere; and as there can be no valid objection against them in the case of David and Judas, so there can be no valid objection against them in any case. Men may assail the sovereignty of God in thus making one to differ from another; but no valid objection ever has, or ever can be brought against it. It is consistent with the benevolence of God, and the freedom and accountableness of man; it is consistent with itself, and with every other doctrine of the Bible; and it is true. Judas never thought of urging it as any excuse for his crime, or for his impenitence. God did him no injustice, and never will do him any. He was gracious to David; but not unjust to Judas. He may be gracious to some, and he may leave others to their own chosen way. The former may not complain, because they are treated better than they deserve; and the latter ought not to complain, because they are treated no worse than they deserve. Let us adore the goodness and severity of God; toward the vessels of wrath severity, toward the vessels of mercy goodness. Let us feel as the Saviour felt when he said, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes!"

3. We are taught by our subject, that *neither the outward expression, nor the inward emotion of sorrow constitutes evangelical repentance*. Who can doubt the depths of Judas's sorrow? If ever there was a heart

wrung with anguish, it was his. His grief was literally intolerable ; so that life itself became a burden. And as to its outward expressions, they were full. But after all, it was the sorrow of the world that worketh death, and itself needed to be repented of. There was in it nothing of the nature of piety, and nothing that God could approve. Such sorrow as his often abounds. It often abounds when men are deeply convinced of their sins, and danger. Penetrated with horror at the thought of what they have done, ready to make any confession, and almost any reparation, yet they are not willing to accept of forgiveness on the terms of the Gospel. Such sorrow is often seen on the bed of death ; it is very apt to be one of the characteristics of death-bed repentance, when the thoughts are thrown back upon a misspent life, and forward upon an undone eternity, and the soul trembles at meeting God in judgment. And when that dread apprehension becomes a reality, and the spirit actually stands before God its Maker, to be judged according to the deeds done in the body, no doubt its agony will be excessive ; and the miserable transgressor will cry to the rocks and the mountains to fall upon him, and hide him from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. And what will be the outward expression, and the inward emotions of its sorrow, when at last, sinking beneath that wrath from which falling mountains cannot shield him, all its waves and billows go over him ? My friends, if you have had, and have now, no other than such a sorrow, it is time to take the alarm. Without repenting of such *repentance*, it will one day be said of you, as it is of Judas, "It had been good for them if they had never been born." I remark,

4. If many who are convinced of sin refuse the great salvation, *how vain to wait for deeper convictions in order to become Christians.* Multitudes believe that all that is wanting to make them willing to fall in with the method of salvation by Jesus Christ, is to feel the burden of sin, and their desert of punishment, more deeply than they have ever felt them. If they could feel as convinced sinners feel, or as a dying man feels, they do not doubt they should come humbled at the footstool of mercy, and receive Jesus Christ as he is offered in the Gospel. But such persons are strangely ignorant of themselves—their hearts deceive them. It is not a sense of sin and misery alone that leads men to Christ; they are drawn by cords of love. Such persons would not love Christ any more than they now love him, if they saw themselves this moment suspended over the bottomless pit. Look at Judas. Did a sense of sin make him a Christian? Did fear, and terror, and agony that could not be endured, make him a Christian? Ah no! There is something harder, something deeper, in the heart of man, than to be thus subdued. Not a man in this little assembly but is convinced enough of his lost estate to make the Saviour welcome, if his heart were touched with love to God. This postponement of present duty for greater convictions, and more fearful terrors, is misleading you. Come they may; and they may find you imperturbable except to fear,—still dead to every grateful and tender affection,—and wrapt in gloom. They may find you like Judas. You *cannot* hope in God's mercy simply by desiring to do it, and because driven to it by agony. Take your time for it *now*, my friends. Take God's time for it *now*; for though the day of anguish will come certainly;

the day, the precious, the expected day of *nope*, may never come, if the present hour is lost. I add,

5. From our subject, let us learn *how hopeless is the condition of those who are stupid in sin*. If many who are convinced of sin, confess it, and in some sort repent, fall short of the kingdom of heaven; what shall be said of those who have not even this miserable sorrow? They have no susceptibility of conscience, and they would think it a reproach to shed tears because they are sinners. They shut out every serious thought. They seem given over to blindness and hardness of heart. O this state of mind puts a man far from the kingdom of God! If the awakened *may* not find a Saviour, and the anxious, and those who confess their guilt, *may* find a place in hell with Judas; where will *your* place be, who sleep on, and are never anxious, and think no more of God and eternity, and of Christ and his salvation, than though they were fables?

My dear friends, is not this spiritual insensibility characteristic of some of you? O into what a fearful slumber have you fallen! Whence is it, that the very torpor of death has thus benumbed you? Whence is it that you are not to be aroused, either by the good word of God, or the powers of the world to come? I have no wish, God knoweth, to see any of you the victims of a soul-destroying delusion, and hear any of you profess repentance while it is hid from your eyes. But I would see this apathy disturbed. I would fain see those indications of reviving sensibility, which shall be the precursors of a true repentance,—the precursors of faith and hope, and not the forerunners of despair.

Despair!—why need we speak of despair? Here in

a world so full of the Saviour's love—here under the Bethel Flag—here at the cross—here in the great ocean where everything assures us there is no sin too great to be forgiven? I will not speak of it any more. I will not think of it. No sinner is too far gone in iniquity to be reclaimed, and owned as the child of God. Come then, my friends, to David's God. Come to the Son of David, whose hysop branch is fresh-dipped in the blood of the Great Atonement. Say, with a deep and true repentance, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Purge me with hysop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice."

SERMON XXV.

THE EXCUSES OF MEN THEIR CONDEMNATION.

LUKE xiv. 18. And they all, with one consent, began to make excuse.

THIS passage is from that part of the evangelical history, which has generally been called the Gospel Supper. It was uttered by the Saviour, on the occasion of his going into the house of one of the chief Pharisees, to eat bread on the Sabbath day. "Then said he, a certain man made a great supper, and bade many; and sent his servants at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent, began *to make excuse.*"

This is an affecting exhibition, on the one hand, of God's great love and mercy; and on the other, of man's great ingratitude and sin. God, on his part, has made a grant of his Son Jesus Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour, to this lost and perishing world. To the guilty and condemned, he proclaims pardon; to the rebellious and contending, peace, reconciliation, and hope; to the sorrowful, glad-tidings of great joy; to the poor, imperishable riches; to the hungry, a feast of fat things; to the dying, life and immortality in the heavens. He has not merely revealed a general knowledge of Jesus Christ, but has directly and solemnly made the unembarrassed offer of him to men, and that

they may be saved by faith in his great sacrifice. The offer and the gift are equally free; independent in every possible manner of the worthiness of men, and recognizing them only as sinners. They are proclaimed indiscriminately to all the hearers of the Gospel, and to every one of them in particular. No sin, however enormous and aggravated, places any sinner beyond the reach of this offered salvation. Nay, more, God has made it the *duty* of every one who hears the Gospel to accept it that he may be saved; and he cannot reject it but at his peril. And in all this, we cannot fail to see infinite love and mercy. Men reject this salvation, and make light of it; and as though this were not enough, all begin to *make excuse* for their conduct. And in this we see man's great ingratitude and sin.

The object of the present discourse, therefore, is to show,

That men are naturally disposed to excuse their conduct in rejecting the Gospel of Christ;

That there is no foundation for their excuses;

That the motives which induce them thus to excuse their conduct, only condemn them; and that

There is great danger in making such excuses.

I. I am to show that men are naturally disposed to excuse their conduct in rejecting the Gospel of Christ.

The language of the parable is here worthy of a passing remark. No sooner than the invitation was given, than "*all began to make excuse.*" This is the first and most natural reception the Gospel meets with. Men do not seem to themselves deliberately to have made up their minds to *reject it*; but postpone their decision by offering some plausible excuse.

It is among the painful evidences of man's apostasy, and one of the strongest proofs that his understanding is darkened, his conscience faithless, and his heart depraved, that he can ever consent to *excuse himself* for rejecting the dear-bought and freely-offered mercy of God in the Gospel of his Son. It would seem to belong to the nature of sin always thus to excuse itself. It is a self-exalting, self-justifying, and not a self-reproaching and self-condemning spirit. Men naturally shut their eyes upon the deformity of their own conduct, and are slow to see it as it is. They have *inherited* a self-excusing spirit, and cover their sin, like Adam; and under whatever circumstances they persist in rejecting the divine mercy, are sure to invent some apology for their impenitence. When they are reprov'd and rebuked for their reluctance to fall in with the offers of salvation, instead of confessing their fault, as their duty, their honor, their safety and their happiness bind them to do, and as they are called and bound to do by the most solemn considerations; they resort to a thousand unworthy subterfuges. Sometimes they find an apology in their age; sometimes in their peculiar circumstances; sometimes in their business; sometimes in their domestic or public relations; sometimes in their own natural dispositions and temperaments; and sometimes in the temptations by which they are surrounded. Sometimes they find it in the character of God; in the unbending claims of his law; in his unchanging and everlasting purposes; and in their dependence on his Spirit. Sometimes they find it in the conduct of the professors of religion, or its ministers; sometimes in the truth of God, and sometimes in error; but find it they will, and are ever ready

to open their lips in palliating their indifference, neglect, and rejection of the Gospel. From the hour in which the Tempter infused the first taint of sin into the bosom of man, breathing his deadly poison in the language of apology for his proposed crime, the poison has spread, and contaminated the race. Old and young have imbibed it. It is found even in good men, just in the measure in which their goodness is imperfect. But nowhere is it found more certainly than in men who are strangers to the great salvation, and who, like those in the parable, seem pleased and gratified that they have found some apparently solid excuse for declining the invitations of redeeming mercy. But

II. There is *no foundation* for their excuses.

I am not going into any labored argument to prove this; because a true and solid *excuse* there cannot be. We may be always sure, that when men excuse themselves for neglecting to do what God requires, there is some *fallacy* in their excuses, whether we can discover it or not. There is a delusion in sin; and the heart of man is "*deceitful* above all things, as well as desperately wicked." The spirit of excuses comes first from the love of sinning; then, from a wilfully blinded conscience; and then, from perverting and resisting the instructions of God's truth. Truth always exposes sin; it condemns sin; and throws off the veil by which men attempt to conceal, or excuse it.

It is no difficult matter to *refute* all the excuses which the impenitent urge in defence of their rejecting the Gospel; and to follow out, and show the absurdity of every form, and turn, and change of the sophistical and false reasoning by which they excuse themselves for rejecting it. It may, perhaps, be well sometimes to do

this ; but after all, it may be questioned whether much is gained by thus reasoning with them. The strong hold which the Gospel has over every man that rejects it, will be found to be *his own conscience*. The strength of the divine government over wicked men, lies in their *own consciences*. The great advantage which the ministers of the Gospel have, in enforcing its claims upon those who reject it, is the concurrent claims of their *own consciences*. When a child once begins to *excuse* himself for a fault alleged against him, he at once betrays his own weakness. When a criminal at the bar once begins to *excuse* himself for the crime of which he is indicted, he at once implicitly confesses his guilt. And so, when a sinner once sets himself to framing *excuses* for rejecting the Gospel, he only betrays his weakness, and implicitly confesses his crime. His conscience is ill at ease. He feels within his own bosom that he is doing wrong. He has not a conscience void of offence. If he were not inwardly conscious that he did in fact sinfully reject the Gospel, he would deny the charge, and no longer attempt to extenuate it. We may assume it as a universal truth, that whenever a man attempts to excuse his sinful conduct, he himself is conscious of his wrong. Conscience was implanted in the human bosom on purpose to bear this testimony for God. It is not necessary to refute the excuses which men make for rejecting the divine mercy. They themselves have no confidence in them. The intuitive decisions of conscience refute them all, however ingenious they may be. They know too well all "the wickedness which their heart is privy to," and the motives which govern them in turning a deaf ear to the calls of God. If there are instances in which they do

not know, it is because their mind and conscience are defiled and impaired by sin. No man, who believes the Bible to be the word of God, and is satisfied that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; can deny his obligations to receive the Saviour, or question the inexcusable wickedness of rejecting him. He may still the voice of conscience for a time ; but it is only for a time. When you tell him that the day is coming in which God will fasten a sense of his guilt upon his soul ; when you point him to a dying bed, and to the scenes of the Last Judgment, and tell him that he will be speechless then, and without excuse ; he feels and knows that what you say is true, because he is even *now* convinced that his excuses are nothing but refuges of lies.

Men who reject the Gospel, know a great deal of the state of their own minds. Their consciences do not fail them so often as we suppose. It is not so dark and blinded, but it sees what they are doing. It is not so bound and imprisoned, that it cannot speak. It is not so badly instructed and faithless, that you have need to enter upon a tedious process of argumentation in order to show them the sin of denying and rejecting the Lord that bought them. And when they feel themselves obliged to enter upon such a process, in order to defend their unbelief, it is because they know it is sinful, and needs the excuses they offer. Why should they attempt to excuse it, if it is not sinful ; and if they themselves have no sense of its sinfulness ? If there is no guilt in their rejecting the Gospel, it *needs* no excuse ; and if there is guilt in rejecting it, it *admits* of none. We affirm, therefore,

III. In the third place, that the motives which induce

them to excuse their conduct in rejecting the Gospel, only condemn them. Why is it that all begin to make excuse when God sets before them the provisions of his mercy, and invites them to become partakers of this bounty?

1. It is because they have an *unhumbled mind*. It is because the Gospel reproaches and condemns them as sinners, and they are not willing to reproach and condemn themselves. A man who is willing to acknowledge his fault, does not desire any excuse for it. A man who sees and feels the sinfulness of living in this world of mercy, and being surrounded with all the tokens and memorials of his Saviour's love, and rejecting that love and mercy, and is willing honestly to confess his iniquity in so doing; does not seek for any excuse for his conduct. He lays his hand upon his mouth. He feels that he is without excuse. He condemns himself, and wonders that he is not consumed. The motive which induces him not to do this, is the self-justifying spirit of an unhumbled mind. Need I say this condemns him?

2. Nor is this disposition to frame excuses to be sought for only in the want of a self-condemning and humble mind; but in the *want of all present purposes of forsaking sin*. It is not the sinner's object, by making excuses, to become a Christian; but rather his object to keep himself from becoming a Christian. One reason why awakened sinners stay away so long from Christ is, that they make so many excuses. The Gospel saves, but only on the condition of repenting of sin, and forsaking it. Where men have no present purpose of doing this, their love of sin, and the present determination to practise it, drives them to their vain excuses.

Were they willing to forsake their sins, they would desire no excuse for rejecting the Gospel, but would gratefully accept it, and with all their hearts. It is their love of sin, therefore, that originates their excuses.

3. They take refuge in their excuses in order to *soothe an awakened conscience*. They mean to continue in the rejection of the Gospel, but wish to do it with the least possible self-reproach. And hence these excuses! Their object is to quiet conscience. Very few persons have hardihood and boldness enough to continue in the rejection of the Gospel, without some open or secret apology for so doing, that brings at least a temporary relief, a soothing balm for a wounded and bleeding conscience. They *may* succeed in doing this, and they may not; but if they do, they will certainly destroy their souls. Let us pass, then,

IV. To show the great danger of thus making such excuses.

And wherein does it lie? It lies simply here. The understanding becomes blinded by them, and the heart hardened, and men persevere in rejecting God's salvation, with a gradually diminished impression of the sinfulness of their conduct, till they come to believe in the validity of their own excuses, and at length to feel that there is no sin in rejecting it. They have reasoned sophistically so long, and so boldly, that not only is their pride enlisted in defending their own conclusions, but they themselves confide in them. When they first occurred to their minds, they may have appeared perfectly absurd. No deranged man ever reasoned more absurdly, in relation to things of this world, than men sometimes reason in order to excuse themselves for not becoming Christians. We

could scarcely believe, if we did not know it, how foolishly and weakly they reason ; yet they themselves, though at first dissatisfied, become at last satisfied with their excuses. Men, in this way, become their own deceivers and their own destroyers. They misinform and mislead themselves, and stifle the voice of conscience, on purpose that they may continue in their unbelief with the least possible self-reproach. Then it is that they sin with great rapidity and power. No light of truth convinces them, and no threatenings move them, and no voice of tenderness assails them. The faint echoes of a stifled conscience become weaker and weaker, and there is nothing to hold them back from destruction. God becomes angry with them, and withdraws his Spirit, and in judgment abandons them to their own delusions. Other things are displeasing in his sight ; but when he sees an immortal being ruined by sin, and for whom he has given his only Son to die, making light of his proffered mercy ; and when he hears him soberly excusing himself for rejecting this salvation ; what wonder if he should swear in his wrath that he should never enter into his rest ? The man who is willing frankly to confess that he has no excuse, and who will confess and forsake his sins, shall find mercy ; while he who attempts thus to cover his iniquity, not only shall find that his excuses fail him, but that he has been deluding and overreaching himself, and treasuring up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath.

“And they all, with one consent, began to make excuse.” What an indelible reproach is this to the human character ! And yet how many, among this audience, have been living upon their excuses up to the

present hour ? And even now, when once more assured that there is enough in their heavenly Father's house, and to spare ; nay, that there are wine and milk, without money and without price ; that Wisdom has furnished her table, and that her oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready ; are still saying, " I pray thee, have me excused !"

Bear with me, a few moments, while I set before you what you are actually doing. You are a fallen sinner by nature ; and all your days, have done nothing but disobey the God of heaven, and abuse his goodness and love. His law condemns you, and you will very soon be called to answer its demands before his bar. You live in a world, the most remarkable and interesting event in the history of which is the incarnation and death of his own Son, on purpose to satisfy the divine justice, which you yourself can never satisfy, and to reconcile you to God by the blood of his cross. The blessings of this salvation, God freely offers *to you*. He sets life and death before you, and calls upon you to choose life, that you may live. Jesus himself stands and cries in the midst of you, " If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." God pledges his word and oath to you that he is willing you should enjoy all the blessings of this salvation, both in this world, and that which is to come. He offers them all to you on the simple condition that you will accept them ; and holds himself ready and bound actually to bestow them upon you, on your acceptance of his offer.

But you desire to *be excused*. To be excused from *what* ? From receiving Christ Jesus as he is offered in the Gospel. From accepting pardon at his hands, though no other being in the universe can give you

pardon ; and without receiving it from him, you must go into eternity unforgiven, and with all your sins upon your head. From receiving his pure robe of righteousness, when nothing else can cover your shame. From taking your place at his table, when if your souls feed not on that bread of life, you starve and perish. You would be excused from a place in his kingdom, from a crown of righteousness ; though, if you have not these, you must dwell in utter darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. You would be *excused* from participating in these unmeasured joys ! Others will wear that crown ; have a place in that kingdom ; sit at that table ; be clothed with that righteousness ; rejoice in that society, and shout that song ; but when your place and name are inquired for, as among the invited guests, they learn that you desired to be *excused* !

What madness is this ! When the world invites you to its gayety and joys ; you may beg to be *excused*. When sin allures, and the great Adversary solicits, and the world of darkness and sorrow tempts and draws you ; you may ask to be *excused*. But when God calls you ; when the Saviour entreats you to come ; when heaven invites ; send no expressions of regret, make no excuses, and give no refusal. No, plead nothing ; but go at their bidding. Plead no unworthiness ; but go just as you are. Plead no poverty ; but go to be made rich. Plead no mean excuse ; no nakedness even ; but go to be clothed in white raiment. Plead no youth, no age, no pressure of worldly business ; but make every other engagement give way to the invitation of the King of kings. Plead for no future and more convenient season ; all things are *now* ready ;

now is the accepted time, and whosoever will may come.

But if you still insist on being excused, unreasonable and wicked as is your importunity, it must, for all we can see, be gratified. There is a period when God sends the invitation for the last time, and when, on hearing your perpetual excuses, he says, "*None of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper!*" Yes, he will excuse you from the heavenly banquet, if you are set on meaner food. He can hold the feast without you, though he should even compel them to come from the highways and hedges, that his house may be filled. Nay, this very invitation rejected, and he may shut the door upon you forever!

In defiance then of the discouraging influence of all these subtle and erroneous apologies, I once more lay before you the invitations of heaven's tenderest mercy. In his name, who came to seek and save that which was lost, I beg you not to venture another, and peradventure, a final refusal. It may be, that some of you feel that you are exposed to eternal death. You are weary and heavy laden, under the burden of your transgressions, and would fain escape the coming wrath. You are distressed, and anxiously concerned for the salvation of your souls. Nor is it with any doubt of the glorious all-sufficiency of Christ as a Saviour, or any secret misgiving that you will not find him every way adequate and fitted to all your wants, that I proclaim to you a free salvation through the merits of his blood. If you have any due sense of your sins, you must see that it is impossible for you to be justified by any righteousness of your own. The law you have broken ; and therefore cannot live by it. Its con-

demning sentence is the stern and sweeping language, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." The claim is just and unalterable. "If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by *faith of* Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe." This is the method of deliverance; and it is vain that you look for any other.

Our subject, therefore, urges you without delay, without resorting to any devices of your own, to accept the only salvation which infinite love and wisdom have devised, or ever will devise. It is the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—the rich, the glorious redemption that is in Christ Jesus! As poor, guilty, perishing sinners, repair to Jesus Christ, and you will find from him, and in him, all that your perilous and ruined condition requires.

I have no warrant to treat with you at all, until you abjure all your excuses. It is not any *excusable* rebellion to which the Gospel is adapted, but it is to the rebel who is self-condemned, and to the sinner who feels that he is without excuse. And now, if any of you will still urge your excuses, I have not another word to say. Your duty is plain; and I leave you to plead your excuses in the presence of your Maker. The claim is his, and not mine. He knew your condition, and all your excuses, when he gave his Son to die; and he knows them all now, when he says, "Come, for all things are ready." Nor will you refuse to hear his voice, except from radical aversion of heart to him, from an inward dislike to his Gospel, and the terms

on which it is offered,—engendered and fostered by a desire to be saved in some other way than that which the Gospel proposes, and a lurking purpose to be saved in some other way, or not to be saved at all. I can only set life and death before you, and urge you to choose life ; and if you refuse it, assure you, in God's name, that you must die in your sins.

It is the King of heaven himself that bids you come ; and if there are those of you who still slight his invitation, the time is at hand when you shall know what that Scripture meaneth, “ They that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.”

SERMON XXVI.

SCRIPTURAL VIEWS OF CHRIST.

Matthew xxii. 42. What think ye of Christ?

THIS is a great question. It behooves us all to make this inquiry. What are our views of him and his great work? Is he altogether lovely in our eyes, and precious to our hearts? Do we trust him as the Incarnate Son of God, and submit to him as the anointed King of Zion? Is he our joy, our confidence, our *all*? According to a man's practical judgment in these matters, are his state and character. His thoughts on other subjects will be greatly influenced by his view of this. His spirit, his conduct, and his destiny are all influenced by his views of Christ. We have more to do with Christ than with any other being in the universe. And the Bible has more to say of him than of any other.

I. The first and most important fact which is revealed concerning Christ is, that he is truly and properly God.

His divinity is the foundation on which the Christian system rests. "*To us a child is born,*" says the Prophet Isaiah, "*to us a Son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*" "*Out of thee, thou Bethlehem of Judah,*" says the Prophet

Micah, "*shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel, and his going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity.*" In a style peculiarly his own, and lofty as his subject, the inspired Evangelist affirms, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. "He thought it no robbery,"* says the Apostle, "*to be equal with God.*"

His works attest his divinity. "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." His authority attests it; for in his own name, he issues the laws of the God of heaven. His promises attest it; for they are such as God only can make, and fulfil. The final Judgment attests it; for life and death are decided by his sentence; and the eternal destiny of all intelligent beings is suspended on his pleasure. It is a fact of deep and everlasting interest therefore, that Christ is no other than the God of heaven and earth; the Lord and Creator, and Judge of the universe. He it is *who was, and is, and is to come.* He it is who is worshipped by all the heavenly hosts, and receives their everlasting praise and adorations. Look up, and behold your Lord and Redeemer. *At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*

II. Another fact revealed concerning Christ is, that he became incarnate and dwelt among men.

God is one in nature, and three in Persons. This Trinity of Persons in the Godhead includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These three exist from eternity in the same undivided nature, with the same power, the same wisdom, and the same equality of all perfection. They are consequently the same one, in-

comprehensible and Eternal God ; because in each of them the Divinity is the same. The second of these is the Eternal Son ; *the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us*. A real and substantial union of the divine and human nature has taken place in the Person of Jesus Christ ; so that he is become both God and man. From the early promise made to our first parents in Eden, this consolatory truth was revealed from generation to generation, and more and more distinctly revealed, through a long series of ages, till *the branch rose from the root of Jesse* ; till the *Virgin conceived and brought forth her Son* ; till the *child was born, who should sit upon the throne of David*, and of *whose kingdom there should be no end*. After the lapse of four thousand years from the apostasy, the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary with the message, "*Behold, thou shalt conceive and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus*." He is God, because he retains the same divine nature, which he had, and always will have from eternity to eternity ; and he is man, because having assumed the nature of man, by uniting to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, he was placed in a state of perfect dependence ; was accountable to God, like other men ; and like all other men, was in a state of trial, from his birth to his death.

It may not be supposed that God altered in his nature, or by any change in his divinity was transformed into man ; nor that the divinity was mixed or blended with human nature, so as to form out of the two a compounded nature, which should be neither human nor divine. Though the two natures really and substantially unite, yet each remains entire in itself ; so that by the one, Christ is inferior, by the other, he is equal to

the Father in all things. This is the doctrine of the Bible, concerning the mystery of the Incarnation. We frankly acknowledge it is a fact beyond the natural comprehension of men. We say concerning it as Paul said, "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh!" We should not credit it upon any other than the divine testimony. And is it not a mystery, so full of goodness on the part of God, that it claims our most grateful homage?—unfathomable indeed, but the depth of his mercy and grace! The great God, infinitely and completely happy within himself, assumed our nature with all its pains and miseries; the God omnipotent and immortal, assumed our weakness, and dwelt in mortal flesh. O thou divine Redeemer! to redeem a slave, thou hast descended from thy throne; thou hast become like one of us!

III. Another fact revealed concerning Jesus Christ is, that he died to make an atonement for the sins of men.

The low estate in which he was born, well answered to the great purpose for which he came. The shepherds of Bethlehem found Joseph and Mary, and the infant lying in the manger. It was by this humble assumption of our nature, that he rendered himself capable of making an adequate atonement for our sins. From the moment of his birth he became the humble, obedient sufferer. And from that moment, he began the work of our redemption. "*It became him, by whom are all things, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect* THROUGH SUFFERINGS."

We had become the slaves of sin, fettered by the curse, and bound over to eternal death. But he assumed our guilt, and took our chains. He has blotted

out the hand-writing that was against us ; has effaced the otherwise indelible mark of reprobation ; and raised us to the adoption of sons. The divinity of his Person stamped an efficacy upon his sacrifice, that made it effectual to all who believe ; while it opened the door of hope to our lost race, which had otherwise been shut forever.

Under the law, almost all things were purified with blood ; and without the shedding of blood, there is no remission. For the first four thousand years of the world, the bloody sacrifices of the Patriarchal and Mosaic economy led all those who feared God to look for this great sacrifice of his Son. It was *impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.* These sacrifices were limited in their duration, and only prefigured the mighty Christian sacrifice, the great propitiation of Jesus Christ, *who, through the Eternal Spirit offered up himself unto God. Though he knew no sin, yet was he made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* How often do the Scriptures express this truth, in all their own impressiveness and variety. “ *The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* ” — “ *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* ” — “ *The Son of Man is come to give his life a ransom for many.* ” — “ *This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.* ” — “ *Christ died for the ungodly.* ” — “ *He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* ” — “ *His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.* ” The death of the Son of God, as the Propitiation for sin ! My friends, what shall we say of it ? — Interesting, but solemn fact ! Joyful, but mournful topic ! O !

who was it that suffered?—what did he suffer?—for whom did he suffer? Think of *Him*,—the Father's fellow, and the church's Shepherd. Think of the *Garden and the Cross*, and see how they demonstrate, on the one hand, the enormity of our guilt, and on the other, the force of his Almighty love. Think of the debased and abject character of those for whom he died ;—men born in sin, forgetful of every obligation, and the enemies of God! O! it was the hour of Satan's triumph and the power of darkness, when they nailed him to the cross! Little did they anticipate in this tragical event the pledge of their own defeat and shame. That man of sorrows is the Saviour of the world! That naked, bleeding victim, is the Mighty Champion and Conqueror of death and hell! O what triumphs of love, of holiness, of heaven were there, when the earth trembled ; and the sun grew dark ; and the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom ; and the rocks rent asunder ; and the graves gave up their dead ; and hell itself was moved with terror ; and the Great Redeemer exclaimed, "*It is finished,*" and gave up the ghost !

IV. Another fact in relation to Jesus Christ, is that, at the predicted period, he rose from the dead.

Soon after Jesus had expired, *Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate, and obtained the body, and took it down from the cross, and having wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, laid it in his own sepulchre.* Jesus had often mentioned before his death, that on "*the third day he should rise again.*" The better, therefore, to secure his body, the chief priests and Pharisees sealed up the stone that was upon the mouth of the tomb, and placed around it a guard of soldiers. But in *vain did the*

Heathen rage, and the Princes take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Christ. Early in the morning, on the third day after his crucifixion, the earth shook ; an appointed angel descended from heaven and rolled back the stone that was at the mouth of the sepulchre, and sat upon it : and by his own divine power, the Saviour rose. About the dawn of day, Mary Magdalene, and some other devout women were repairing to the sepulchre to embalm the body, but unexpectedly, even to them, his body was not to be found. As the stone was rolled back and the cave open, they entered into the sepulchre, and behold an angel was sitting there robed in white. And they were afraid ; but the angel said unto them, "*Fear not ye ; for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here ; for he is risen as he said : come see the place where the Lord lay.*" On the intimation of Mary, Peter and John hastened to the sepulchre, but found only the clothes in which the body of Jesus had been wrapped. They wondered and departed. To remove all doubt concerning the reality of his resurrection, Jesus himself, on the very day on which he rose from the dead, publicly announced the event by his own living voice, and showed himself alive to a number of his followers, and conversed, and ate with them, and reminded them of what he had said to them before his death, upon the subject of his resurrection.

In the resurrection of Christ we have the strongest proof of the truth of the religion he came to establish, the strongest consolation of his followers, and the most decisive victory thus far gained over the powers of darkness. Had he died and seen corruption, he had been like other men who sleep in the grave, and min-

gle with the dust. But the degradation of his death is now lost in the glory of his revival from the dead. Death is disarmed, and no longer holds his dominion over him. *He* has gained the victory; and eternal thanks to God, who hath thus given *us* the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord! It is in view of this glorious triumph of our Lord, that Job exclaims, "*I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day on the earth, and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God!*" And that Peter exclaims, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, from the dead!*" And in view of it, let *us* say, "*To him be glory forever and ever!*" This is he "*that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of death and of hell.*" This is he,—*the first begotten of the dead—the Prince of the kings of the earth—*through whom cometh to pass that saying, which is written, "*O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?*"

V. Another fact the Scriptures reveal concerning Christ is, that he is ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God.

He remained upon the earth, after his resurrection, forty days. On the fortieth day, he led forth his disciples to a high mountain, not far from Jerusalem, where he lifted up his hands and blessed them, and as he blessed them, rose through the air, till a cloud received him out of their sight. In the language of the Evangelist, "*he was received up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God.*" The *right hand of God* is

the first place of honor and power in the universe. Thither Jesus ascended, not alone, but conducted by an innumerable train of the heavenly hosts. In his human, as well as his divine nature, he is *raised far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.* Being the *brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person,* he is elevated as far above the angels, "*as he hath by inheritance, a more excellent name than they.* For unto which of the angels, hath the Father said at any time, *Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee ?* But to the Son he saith, *thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity ; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*" There is nothing higher, and nothing greater, within the glory and blessedness of heaven, than that to which Christ Jesus is exalted. United with the Deity as he is, he holds the same sovereign dominion with the Father, over all creatures, and is especially "*head over all things to the church.*" There he reigns as the "*Prince of the kings of the earth.*" There he reigns to rule, enrich, and protect his people. Having ascended up on high, he led captivity captive. There he lives to send down the renovating and sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit ; to *give gifts to men, that the Lord God might dwell among them.* "*I tell you the truth,*" said he to his disciples, "*it is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the comforter will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you, that he may abide with you forever.*" In him are

boundless resources of wisdom, grace, and strength, peace, light and joy, for the comfort and edification of his saints in every age. Nothing can harm the friends of God and holiness, while Christ is on the throne. There are no trials they cannot sustain, no dangers they cannot encounter, no enemies they cannot vanquish, so long as "*it is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, and who is ever at the right hand of God.*" Suffer for a while, they may; but *nothing shall separate them from the love of Christ.* Struggle for awhile, they may; but their struggles will soon be over, and their conflicts will be remembered, only by the conquests they have won, and the grace through which they obtained the victory. I add,

VI. Another fact which the Scriptures reveal concerning Christ, which, though not yet realized, is as certain as though it were already past, is, that *at the end of the world, he will once more appear, and as the Judge of the living and the dead.*

When he ascended up into heaven from Mount Olivet, and in the presence of his gazing and astonished disciples, and while their eyes were following him till a cloud received him out of their sight, behold two angels appeared in white apparel, and said unto them, "*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here, gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven.*" The Prophet Daniel "*saw in the night visions, and behold One, like the Son of Man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him, and there was given him dominion and glory.*" Christ himself foretold the signs of his coming, when he said

to his disciples, "*Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, when they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.*" In the most minute description of the day of judgment given in the Scriptures, he also says, "*When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations.*" Just as he was about to ascend to heaven, he assured his disciples that "*he would come again, and receive them unto himself.*" Paul too directed the Thessalonians to "*wait for the Son of God from heaven;*" and tells them, that "*the Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God.* And to the Hebrews he says, "*So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.*" And in the Apocalypse, the beloved disciple exclaims; "*Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.*"

It is one of the glorious truths of the Bible, that Jesus Christ shall once more appear to judge the quick and the dead. At the end of the world; when the method of redemption shall have accomplished the designs for which it was devised, and the human family are ripe for the last judgment; Jesus shall appear, not as the infant of days, but as the Everlasting Father,—not as the forsaken and despised one, but as the Prince of life and the first begotten from the dead,—to call before him all the nations of men; to assemble the world to judgment; to call together the holy tribes and proclaim their release from sin and woe; to announce

that he is King in Zion ; to welcome the righteous to his kingdom ; and to sentence the wicked to their long dreaded abodes of sorrow and shame.

This will be the day on which the Son of Man will be glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe. Then will he irreversibly determine the destinies of angels and men, and in such a manner as to stop every mouth and murmur forever. And then will he retire to his throne and kingdom, to communicate his love to his people, and to receive their grateful and adoring acknowledgments in the cheerful obedience of eternity, and in the rapturous song, "*Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, who hath redeemed us unto God by his blood !*"

Such are some of the leading facts which the Scriptures reveal concerning Jesus Christ ;—facts, which lie at the foundation of all the truths of revealed religion, and all the hopes and blessedness of the redeemed on earth and in heaven. And in view of them, we remark,

1. With what propriety does the Bible ascribe supreme and everlasting glory to Christ ! No wonder the work of creation, of providence, and of grace, should develop their mysteries and be brought to their final termination by ascribing everlasting glory to Christ. Christ is the glory of the whole. *All things were made by him and for him.* He is the *Alpha and Omega*, the centre and final issue. Of the song of the unnumbered multitudes around the throne, he is the delightful theme. The name of Jesus employs every harp, the glory of Jesus sounds sweet from every string. "*Worthy—worthy is the Lamb that was slain !*" sounds from ten thousand arches of the universe ; while,

with their own new song and emphasis, is echoed by the myriads of the redeemed,—“*for he was slain—for he was slain for us !*” The fallen and the unfallen, place the crown on the head of Jesus. Dominion and glory they give to him. Everything bows at the feet of Jesus. And there, let us bow and give him the honor of the sea as well as the dry land ! *What think ye of Christ ?* O, let our eye be fixed on him ; let our hearts become his throne and altar ; let our lips be forever vocal with his praise ! Let the sea roar, and the waters clap their hands, because Christ is King !

2. With what truth and force, may it be said, in the second place, that Christ is precious to them that believe ! He ever has been so, from the days of his first revelation in the garden of Eden to the present hour. Abraham “*rejoiced to see Christ’s day, and he saw it and was glad.*” Moses esteemed him *more precious than all the treasures of Egypt.* David esteemed him “*fairer than the children of men.*” The Church in her divine songs speaks of him as the “*rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys ;* as “*the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely ;*” and as the one whom “*her soul loveth.*” The wise men of the East adored him. Simeon took him up in his arms, and said, “*Now Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation !*” And to holy men wherever found, Jesus is precious. “*The upright love thee.*” “*Whom having not seen, they love ; in whom, though now they see him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*”

And why should not Christ be precious to us all—to seamen, as well as landsmen ? It was for seamen that he died, and rose, and lives, and reigns. In his tender-

ness and love the most exposed mariner on the ocean, is just as secure as the feeblest lamb of his flock on the land. In his power and faithfulness, his mercy and care, we have resources that never fail. If we did but love him, we should know what that Scripture meaneth, "*he that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye.*" He will indeed care for us, if we love him. We shall be nourished in his bosom, when this world shall have passed away.

To you, who have been born of God ; who have been made sensible of your perishing condition, and felt your need of Christ as a Saviour ; and who have placed all your hopes on him ; well may Christ be precious. And if he is precious now, he will be precious forever. In all your duties and trials he will be precious. When the world loses its charms, he will become more glorious and lovely than ever. When death invades, he will become its mighty conqueror. When you sleep beneath the clods of the valley, he will be the *resurrection and the life*. When the *books shall be opened, and small and great shall stand before God*, the precious Saviour shall *come in the clouds of heaven*, and you shall *go to be ever with the Lord* ; he shall be doubly precious, and more and more precious through interminable ages. I add,

3. One word to you who are still strangers to Christ. My friends, you know not what you do. If you have no interest in the great realities disclosed in the history of Jesus Christ, lamentable is your case indeed. Here in the person and work of Christ, you may see the only means of expiating your guilt, and the only means of your moral renovation ; the only means of salvation from the condemning sentence when you stand in the

judgment; deliverance from hell and advancement to heaven. Here is the eternal favor of God, when all the nations die. Here are the peace and joy of his right hand, when the earth itself shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the sea shall be burnt up. And *they may be yours*. Christ, the great Author of them, offers them to you. Christ, the great Giver, brings them within your reach, to-day. O that I could persuade you *they may be yours*! Away with that vile suggestion, that they are not *for you*! I have searched the Bible, and I have searched the book of providence, and I cannot find a single consideration within the government of God, that does not warrant you to *make them yours*. What, then, think ye of Christ? Look up and behold him. On the cross his divinity lies concealed; and as one forsaken of heaven and abhorred of earth, he bleeds and dies. But in heaven, he lives and reigns. And through faith in his blood, who liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore, *you may live and reign with him forever*.

THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD.

Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. Man that is born of a woman is of few days; he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. I know that thou wilt bring me to death, to the house appointed for all the living. Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth; are not his days cast as the days of an hireling? We are strangers and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days upon earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. Behold, our days are as an handbreath, and our age is as nothing; verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity.

“OUR Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name! Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil! For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever!

O thou who art the Lord of the living and the dead, and the God of the spirits of all flesh! Thou, O Lord, turnest man to destruction, and sayest, return ye children of men. A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the

night. We have sinned against heaven and before thee, and are not worthy to be called thy children. It is but the just judgment of thy pure and holy law, that we die and return to the dust. When thou, O Lord, dost rebuke man for his iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like the moth. Thou changest the fashion of his countenance, and sendeth him away. But thou, O Lord, art from everlasting to everlasting, and of thy years there is no end. The Lord liveth, and blessed be our Rock, and let the God of our salvation be exalted !

We thank thee, O most merciful God, for the revelation of thy truth and grace in the Gospel of thy Son, in whose name alone we approach thee, in this, the day of thy rebuke and our calamity. For his sake, we pray thee, blot out all our sins, and remember them not against us. Cast them behind thy back, and drown them as in the midst of the sea. Create within us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us. Grant us the influence of thy good Spirit to guide and sanctify us, that, while we live, we may live sober and godly lives ; that when we die, we may die the death of the righteous ; and when we stand before thy bar, we may be accepted in him who liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore. Amen !

Since it has pleased Almighty God, in his holy providence, to remove one of our ship's company by death, we now commit his body to the deep. [*Here let the corpse be launched over board.*] There to rest until the earth and the sea shall give up their dead. - The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it, there to be judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good or bad.

Do thou grant, O Lord, that we thy servants, may make a wise improvement of this solemn and affecting event, and henceforth learn so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. May we know whom we have believed, and be persuaded that he is able to keep that we have committed to him until the day of his coming. We bless thee that he has said to all his true disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also!" May the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, also quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us! Through him who is the resurrection and the life, and in whom, if a man believe, though he were dead yet he shall live, do thou grant that we may all at last hear those blessed words, "Come ye children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." O Lord, hear us. Christ have mercy upon us. Lamb of God who takest away the sin of the world, regard our prayers!

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Ghost be with us all! Amen!

THE END.