

PULPIT MINISTRATIONS;
OR,
SABBATH READINGS.

A SERIES OF
DISCOURSES ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND DUTY.

BY
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S E R M O N S.

SERMON I.

NOT COMFORTLESS.

JOHN, xiv., 18.—“*I will not leave you comfortless.*”

It was a marvelous age of the world when the Son of God became incarnate. Never, since the fall of our first parents, had such a fact been known as that God himself dwelt with men. It changed the whole aspect of human affairs. It moved the nations. It brought angels from their thrones. The excitement was universal. Reigning princes looked upon the descended Deity with jealousy, and venerable philosophers came from far-off lands to pay him their homage. The favored people among whom he dwelt, more than all others, had a deep interest in his mission. For more than thirty years he thus tabernacled among men; and, as “long as he was *in* the world, he was *the light* of the world.” When he made the declaration to his disciples, “*I leave the world* and go to the Father,” it was a heart-rending declaration. They had given him their love and confidence. Whether in the hungry desert

or on the stormy sea, amid friends or foes, he was their shield and helper. "Sorrow filled their hearts," therefore, when he told them he was going away. Nor could he, with all his tenderness and love, at once reconcile them to the declaration, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more." Yet he did not suppress the disclosure, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you; I go my way to him that sent me."

But this was not all that he uttered. With great tenderness he added, "I will not leave you comfortless." What more invaluable legacy could this ever-blessed and adorable Savior have left than that which these few words contain! In making them the subject of the present discourse, we may not attempt to do more than furnish a few outlines of thought, which may, perhaps, suggest more extended and not less profitable views to your own minds. Though the gracious Redeemer is no longer visibly present with his people on the earth, he has not left them comfortless in that he has,

I. In the first place, left them *his most holy word*.

There was no complete and entire volume of heavenly truth in existence at the time he left our earth. Before he left it, therefore, he had raised up and qualified holy men, carefully instructed by himself, who should collect, arrange,

and record the great facts, and principles, and counsels which he himself had revealed and taught, and which should be the guide and comfort of all who fear God in every succeeding age of time. He did this that, in the deep abyss of ruin into which sin had plunged the race, they might still look up to the mansions of light; and that, in these upward thoughts and heavenward struggles, they might not be left to feel their way in darkness, and wander like orphans, with no heavenly Father to look to, and no heaven to hope for.

He speaks to them in his word more fully, even, than in the rich and precious utterances he gave them while he was on earth. It is his heart which there beats, his wisdom which there shines, his love which there breathes forth its tenderness. We see not how the spiritual wants of men could be supplied without the written word. Lands that are without the Bible are "strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Communities baptized at Christian altars, and where the Bible is denied to the common people, are Christian only in name. A regenerated mind is not thus enthralled. You may bandage it in chains of darkness; you may incarcerate it in dungeons; but it struggles for the liberty of the sons of God, it lives and thrives only in the atmosphere of light and

truth. Its graces are sickly, and its very existence a dwarfish and unhealthy existence where it is not fed with the pure milk of the word. When he opened his lips, and spake as never man spake, he told them that he uttered these things "that his joy might remain in them, and that their joy might be full." They must have access either to *Christ himself* or his word. *With* him they could be comforted; *without* him they would be comfortless, unless his *word* should take the place of his presence.

The people of God need not regret his absence if they know how to value his word. There is nothing that keeps their hearts so fresh and youthful, and imparts such perennial joy, as to "draw water from these wells of salvation." "What are you doing?" said a minister, as he one day visited a feeble old man who dwelt in a windy hovel—"what are you doing?" as he saw him sitting beneath the dripping rafters in his smoky chamber, with his open Bible on his knee. "Oh, sir, I am sitting under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to my taste!" there reposing, as all the lovers of truth do, under the bowers of the heavenly paradise, and anticipating the day when "the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters." How often have the aged and the young been heard to sing,

“And when my spirit drinks its fill
At some good word of thine,
Not mighty men who share the spoil
Have joys compared with mine!”

Wherever there is a child of God there is delight in his word. It ever has been so, is so still, and ever will be so. “*Blessed* is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” The more the friends of Christ love their absent Lord, the more abundant is the consolation they draw from his word. It is the light of their Sabbaths, the light of their sanctuary and their ordinances, and the light of every luminous and every gloomy and dark passage of their pilgrimage. When floods and flames, storms and tempests, convulsions and wars shake the earth, and the rod of God is upon their dwelling, they can sing with the sweet singer of Israel, “There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.” The man who has these messages of truth and grace in his heart has Christ himself. He has his promises and his unchanging faithfulness, his atoning blood and justifying righteousness. He can say, as David said, “This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me.” His doubts and fears are chased away; his strength is renewed; his dark hours

are made cheerful; his poverty is exchanged for rich and unsearchable treasures, his rags and nakedness for royal robes, and his troubled heart for the peace the world knows not. The visible and personal presence of the Savior could hardly supply the absence of those great and precious truths and promises which the Bible reveals as "their own, their own forever, their own to possess and enjoy."

II. In the second place, the absent Savior has not left his people comfortless in that he has given them *his promised Spirit*.

The most mysterious truths are often the most precious, because they constitute the integument and envelope which contain those that are the most practical. Though they are "the deep things of God," they are mines of spiritual wealth, and, like deep caverns, are perpetually throwing out streams of gladness.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, is the only God of the Bible. God the Father, the unbending Lawgiver, could pity, but he could not atone. God the Son, the Word Incarnate, could atone, but, as the Word Incarnate, he could not convince, and sanctify, and comfort, because, "having by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of majesty in the heavens." There remained another agency in man's redemption, a *sacred influence* to be exert-

ed — nay, ten thousand times ten thousand hal-
lowed influences still and ever forthgoing from
the Deity, enlightening, restraining, alarming,
convincing, converting, sanctifying, sealing, and
comforting them that are and shall be heirs of
salvation. This is the office and work of the
Holy Spirit, the heavenly Paraclete, the divine
Comforter. Blessed office! blessed agent! thrice
blessed and adorable Deity! thus to make the
abject and polluted minds, the fickle and faithless
hearts of thy people thy selected dwelling, rather
than those far-off heavens.

It was to procure and send this divine Com-
forter that the Son of God left the world. He
knew that his Spirit would be better than his
bodily presence; and, although "sorrow filled
the hearts" of his disciples at this separation from
their Lord, it was "expedient for them that he
should go away." It was expedient *for them!*
"If I go not away," says he, "THE COMFORTER
will not come; but if I depart I will send him
unto you." It was not easy for them to perceive
any adequate compensation for the loss of his
presence. It was to them a grief of heart only—
a grief unmitigated by any corresponding advant-
age, and least of all by a surpassing gain. Yet
were they to be the gainers by his departure.
They would know more, and love more, and be
better and happier Christians, and better, more

useful, and happier men, than if he himself should remain with them.

It is not certain, if he had remained, that all or any of his followers would be permanently benefited by his personal presence. There might be more of curiosity and amusement than of true piety in this sensible intercourse. In the universal rush to see their departed Lord, there might be a criminal neglect of duty. Beyond question it is a wise and benevolent arrangement that he is no longer personally on the earth, and that his place is supplied by the Comforter. So long as he remained "the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." The past exhibitions of his power was "a day of small things." There were, in the last days, to be wondrous disclosures. There would be days of Pentecost not at Jerusalem only, but in the distant ends of the earth; the Spirit descending sometimes like a rushing mighty wind, and sometimes dropping like the rain, or the still more gentle silence of the dew. The gracious Giver would give his people all good things, but he would specially discover to them the *chief good*. This he does when he gives them the promised Spirit. Without him other good would ensnare, would draw off our hearts from God, would make us alive to earth, and dead to eternity and heaven. This is the blessing we most need, and the blessing which

the absent Savior most freely gives. There shall be no drying up of this river of life until the world shall end. Its streams are and shall be as diffused as his people are dispersed. The bodily presence of Christ could not accomplish what his Spirit is thus every where performing. His Spirit can be in all places at the same time, in distant lands or seas, which the bodily presence of Christ could not be. He can multiply the trophies of his grace in widely-distant hemispheres; impart his life-growing power where the footsteps of the Man of Sorrow never trod, and comfort its millions even under the darkest cloud.

The graces and comforts of God's people are also of a higher order under the dispensation of the Spirit than they would have been if permanently sustained by the immediate presence of their divine Master. It is true they would have walked more by sight and less by faith, while their faith would have possessed little activity and vigor, because its place would have been supplied by an easier experience. Now they believe, though they can no longer see. They are thrown absolutely and entirely upon the promised aid of the Comforter. They are severed from the side of their departed Lord, but it is the province of his Spirit to take of things of Christ and show them unto them. His bosom is thus the pillow of all their cares, and fears, and griefs; and,

though denied his bodily presence, his *spiritual* — presence is more valuable than if he dwelt among them. These droppings are the oil of gladness, which makes their cup run over—the flagons that stay the soul. Notwithstanding these suspended influences of the Holy Spirit, and the dark days in which we live, a brighter day, and even brighter hopes, are yet to dawn. The promise is sure, “I will not leave you comfortless.” The people of God are liable to great mistakes in their interpretation of his dealings toward them. It is but apparently that they are left alone in this unfriendly world, even though the Master is gone. If they are not now eminently holy and eminently comforted, it is not because they do not live under a dispensation rich in the means of holiness and comfort. It is better to live now than to have lived in the days of the patriarchs, prophets, and kings of old. It is better to live now than to have lived in the days of the apostles, inasmuch as it is better to be like Christ than to have seen Christ. Better to be ourselves such miracles of grace as his promised and present Spirit may form us, than to have met him in the garden, or beheld him on the cross, or been the witnesses of his resurrection. Better to have our hearts warmed, and our waning light kindled from those altars where the Comforter abides, and from which he will never depart, than from

the smoking embers of that Temple whose glory is departed.

III. In the third place, Christ has not left his people comfortless in that he *has left them his throne of grace.*

There is nothing we are more sure of than this, that God hears and answers prayer. He often gives the very thing his children ask, and at the time they ask it. While they are yet speaking, he hears. For wise reasons, he also often delays the answer. He also sometimes answers by "terrible things in righteousness." And he often answers by denying the thing we ask, and giving us something better in its place.

Holy men of old had sweet intercourse with God; for there was a throne of grace under the ancient dispensation, and long before our adorable Master ascended up on high. Yet it is true that his departure from our earth introduced a *new era* in the history of prayer. The way of access to God was not "made manifest" until the death of Christ. In the innermost apartment of the Jewish Temple there was the visible token of the divine presence over the ark of the covenant, between the cherubim; but it was separated from the ordinary place of worship by a curtain or veil, nor was any Hebrew allowed to pass through it on penalty of death. The high-priest alone might enter once a year, and that

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not without the blood of atonement. When the Savior exclaimed, "It is finished!" and "gave up the ghost," the "veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." No hand of man was there to turn it aside or tear it asunder. Of its own accord it was rent in twain, and not a shred of it remained to forbid or intercept the sinner's approach. The mercy-seat is accessible now to all; to the vilest and humblest worshiper, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female. Now that the great High-priest has entered into heaven on behalf of his people, they have an Intercessor there such as they never had before; One who helpeth their infirmities, illuminates their dark hours, and who stands there offering to God the incense of his own merits, with "the prayers of all saints," upon the golden altar which is before the throne, where not one believing prayer is lost, and whence, in due time, "the full and eternal answer will come down." The inference which the apostle draws from this fact is a most cheering inference, when he says, "Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a *new and living way* which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, let us draw near with a true heart, *in full assurance of faith*." Our departed Lord adverts to this thought with great distinctness and emphasis in

his farewell address to his disciples. So long as he was with them they could ask *him*, but they could ask nothing in *his name*. "Hitherto," says he, "*hitherto* ye have asked nothing in *my name*; ask, and ye shall receive, that your JOY MAY BE FULL." Gone though he be, and not to come again until the end of the world, he has left his *name* with his disciples; he has given his *address* as their passport to the heavenly throne, and with it all which that honored name deserves and can claim. The soul is not left comfortless, therefore, that has access to this throne of grace, and in this new and living way. She is a sufferer only in the neglect of prayer, and when it becomes a weariness. I know too well there are seasons when the Christian is un comforted because he knows not how to draw nigh. Give him access to God, and he is happy. Let him but be enabled to say, "Abba, Father!" and he is happy. The oppressed and burdened there find relief, and those who dwell in darkness there find that "God their Maker gives them songs in the night." No matter how dark the cloud that overshadows them, or how bitter the cup, or how terrible the apprehension, they are not comfortless so long as they have "access by one Spirit through Jesus Christ unto the Father." There are cheered and heavenly emotions within the sufferer's bosom; there is a sweet submission, a

trusting confidence, invigorated hopes, and grateful love; and there is light, and joy, and those unheard-of things in expectancy which God has prepared for them that love him. Celestial light breaks in upon them, and they can sing God's praises at midnight and in the dungeon. The den of lions could not drive the prophet from the throne of grace; martyrs have been wrapped in flames and enraptured with joy because they found the mercy-seat so near. The soul that has learned to go forth and expand itself in prayer, and when no eye sees it and no ear hears it but God's, no longer asks, "Who will show me any good?" Absent though the Savior be in body, he is present with him in spirit. His people know where he dwells, and when and where to meet him.

IV. We remark, in the fourth place, he has not left them comfortless in that he gives them *the pledge and earnest of his and their triumphs*.

The disciples of Christ have something to care for besides themselves. Their first and best affections are bound up in him "whom, having not seen, they love;" their highest hopes and interests are identified with the interests and hopes of that spiritual kingdom which he came to establish on the earth and to perpetuate in the heavens. No small portion of their disquietude and their griefs arises from these peculiar traits of their renovated

and spiritual character. When he hung on the cross, their hearts bled with his; when he was taken down and laid in the tomb of Joseph, their hearts and hopes were buried in his grave. When he ascended from Olivet, they thought, they loved, they wondered, they admired, they adored, they "stood gazing up into heaven." With affectionate and eager anxiety, they inquired, Will he come again? and when? and how? What is the destiny of the little flock he has left in this hostile world? and what will be the final issue of all his toil and suffering? Will the great objects for which he suffered and died be accomplished, or, amid the storms and convulsions of time, and the hostility of a world that lieth in wickedness, will it languish, and are his triumphs doubtful? These are questions which agitated their minds, and filled them with solicitude. And their blessed Master not only sympathized with this solicitude, but hastened to relieve it by assurances never to be forgotten. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. And *now* ye therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

In the same spirit and with the same encouragement does he address his followers in every

age of the world. They would indeed be comfortless if he had left them no pledge and earnest of his and their triumphs. If we read his valedictory address, we shall the better appreciate this earnest and this pledge. "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself." Wonderful words! "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, *I have overcome the world.*" Yes, wonderful words! yet are they but an epitome of the assurances given in the sacred Writings of his and their triumphs. What he accomplished on his cross shall be perfected on his throne. He lives to take care of his Church. The heathen may rage, and the people imagine a vain thing, yet has he set his "King upon his holy hill of Zion." There he sits to fulfill the decree, "As I live, saith the Lord, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory." Oh, it is a sweet thought that the cause of Christ is safe. It ever has been, is now, and ever will be, under the protecting, fostering care of Omnipotent love. Dark as may be the signs of the times to us, there are celestial

visions to which they are not dark. God will take care of his Church in this land of unrest and disquietude; he will take care of the land itself, and he will take care of the world. The angel having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, shall fly more and more swiftly, until it is published to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." He that shall come, will come, and will "not tarry" until his "dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." Then errors shall cease, and God shall turn upon his people a "pure language." Divisions shall pass away; "Zion's watchmen shall see eye to eye, and there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain."

These are not unmeaning and barren truths; nor are they the pictures of poetic fancy; nor can those who believe them be un comforted. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." "The Lord will *comfort* Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody."

And because the interests and triumphs of his followers are identified with those of their departed Lord, they have no fears for themselves.

Where he is they shall be also. His presence in heaven, where, as the anointed "Forerunner, he is for them entered," is the surest pledge that they shall all be finally gathered there. There is not one of them but has a divine warrant for saying, "*As for me*, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." That prayer was never offered in vain, "Father, I *will* that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

V. I add, in the fifth place, these comforts are the more precious in that *he himself is their source and dispenser*.

His work was not all done on Calvary. There he procured these comforts, but he ascended to his throne in the heavens that he might bestow them. There he is as the "heir of all things," and controlling and overruling all for the benefit of his people. What he once said audibly to the "father of the faithful" he says to all his true disciples: "Fear not; I am thy shield and exceeding great reward." What he once said to Simon Peter he says to them: "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." A youthful preacher in a distant land, not long ago called to his rest, once said, "If you heard Christ praying for you in the next room, you

would be satisfied; but *does it make any difference* that he is at the right hand of God?" Oh, what a sweet thought is this! There are voices that speak the words of peace to us here on the earth. We love to hear nature, in its balmy breezes, uttering its lessons from the tranquil firmament, and breathing its fragrance from the green leaves and opening flowers. We love to hear the voice of friendship. The soft tones of parental love, of sisterly affection, of conjugal tenderness, how sweetly they fall upon the ear, and how they cool the throbbing temples and charm the troubled heart! But they are more than earthly voices we listen to when **HE** speaks words of comfort. Oh, let all the earth be silent before **HIM**! Let its potentates kiss the Son. Let seraphim veil their faces, and say one to another, Holy, holy, holy! It is the God-man Mediator who says to his fearful and desponding followers, "I will not leave you comfortless." *It is He* with whom "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." *It is He* who loves as no other loves—whose voice is the excellency of power. *It is He* whose faithfulness is like the great mountains, and whose union with their suffering nature is such that he sympathizes with all their views and desires, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows. **HE** uttered them whose name is "Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God;" who "liv-

eth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore ;” who rebuked the storm, and said to the sea, “Peace, be still ;” and who, though he had not where to lay his head, is the owner of the universe. **H**ē uttered them who made his soul an offering for their sins, and asks no other reward than to see them holy and happy.

Just contemplate the picture. He who came to seek and to save that which was lost, and he who has brought balm to so many wounded hearts, and given them joy and peace in believing, just as he was about to return to the glory he had with the Father before the world was, collects his weeping family about him, and gives them this one assurance, “I will not leave you comfortless.” If he had not uttered another word, this alone was enough to soothe the bursting sorrows of that sad hour. Beloved brethren, ye are not come to the mount that burned with fire, nor to the voice of words which those that heard it entreated that it might not be spoken to them any more. No, it is **THY SAVIOR’S** voice. Had it not been for him, you and I should now have been in hell. Oh, what comfort for the tempted, tempest-tossed soul to hear **HIM** utter such words as these ! They originated at his cross, and now come from his throne. Fall low before that throne ; fly to that heart of love. There he still lives and reigns, and thence the

throbbings of that heart of love send forth these words of peace.

We do not know a more comprehensive promise in the Bible than that which these words contain. That affectionate and big heart of his would not have been satisfied without comprising in these comprehensive words every real blessing for time and eternity, and every true believer, from that favored "guest-chamber" where he celebrated the last Jewish and the first Christian Passover, down to those who are assembled in this sanctuary. And these gifts and calling of God are without repentance. "Whom the Savior loves, he loves to the end." When flesh and heart fail them, and the living and tremulous spirit is flapping her wings over the boundless ocean, the Man of Sorrows is not HE who leaves the agitated spirit for which he died to plunge and flounder in the cold flood, un comforted and alone. Never. His dying children shall be surprised at the munificence of his love as he meets them on the brink of those cold and tempestuous waters. They shall be surprised at themselves that they can enter into the stream so calmly, and bear their testimony to the last that he does not leave them comfortless. And when the long night of the tomb is passed, he will come again, bearing on his banner of light and love the memorable words, "I am the resurrection and the life. He

that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Living and dying men, will you not listen to the voice of the Comforter? Unto you, oh men, he calls, and his voice is to the sons of men. He encourages all to come freely to him. Bethlehem's angels to-day repeat the glad tidings of great joy that to us there is a Savior. The last invitation in the Bible is the freest of all: "Who-soever will, let him take the waters of life freely!"

SERMON II.

UNREASONABLE REQUESTS GRATIFIED.

PSALM cvi., 15.—“*And he gave them their requests, but sent leanness into their souls.*”

WE have more reason to be afraid of the world when it smiles than when it frowns. When there are no rough inequalities in our path, and no lowering clouds above us—when at every step we tread upon verdure and flowers, and our whole course is bright with sunshine or studded with stars, it is high time for us to look well to our spiritual interests.

The Scriptures abundantly sound this note of alarm. They instruct us that the lofty summits of earthly expectation are the “slippery places” whence “the ungodly who prosper in the world” are “cast down into destruction.” The rich man in the parable, who at last “lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torment,” received his “good things” in the present life. The man who so proudly said, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry,” had scarcely uttered these vain words when the sentence fell upon his ear, “Thou

fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee!" It is a poor and meagre portion that begins and ends with time; we may enjoy it to the full, and at last be so poor as to beg a drop of water to cool our tongue.

Of multitudes besides the Hebrews that fell in the desert may it be recorded, "And God gave them their requests, but sent leanness into their souls." They had been fed with manna which daily fell from heaven; man "did eat angels' food." But this did not satisfy them; they lusted for flesh to eat. And God gave them their request, unreasonable as it was; but they were in no way the gainers by having this unreasonable request gratified.

The method of this discourse, therefore, is to show *when the requests of men are unreasonable; that, notwithstanding their unreasonableness, such requests are often gratified; and that in gratifying them, God is very apt to send leanness into their souls.*

I. Our first object is to show when the requests of men are unreasonable.

There are requests that are of impracticable attainment, and those there are that terminate in objects that are perfectly worthless. The unreasonableness of these is too obvious to need remark. Our requests may be both important and attainable, and yet be unreasonable.

1. They are always unreasonable, in the first place, *when they are purely and supremely selfish*. When reason and conscience have the supremacy, they never fail to rebuke the littleness and meanness of a selfish heart. The man who lives to consult his own ease, or honor, or pleasure, or advantage, as the leading object of his wishes—who makes himself, and those in whose interests he has a personal concern, the centre of all his cares and affections—who has no such warm, and tender, and sincere love to his fellow-men as prevents him from trespassing on the rights of others, and as even constrains him to do good to others as he has opportunity, is under the influence of that ruling passion which gives human wickedness its greatest power. Our own character, and wants, and enjoyments, and usefulness, have their appropriate place and importance; but this is a very different thing from sacrificing every thing to self. To desire for myself alone—to hoard up and enjoy only for myself—to keep the world around me in fermentation, and my own mind in frenzied excitement, that self may be all, one would think is too ludicrous to be human; yet is it too often a true picture of the human heart. There is no greater absurdity than supreme egotism; no greater impiety; and no greater disappointment than the desires it generates. While it makes life a perpetual delu-

sion, it makes death the most fearful reality, and gives it its mortal sting.

2. In the next place, the requests of men are unreasonable when they are *immoderate*.

The golden mean of human desires is a rare attainment, and a rare expression of moral principle. The Bible does not condemn the diligent pursuit of earthly good when pursued within the limits of true wisdom. It is never pursued wisely or lawfully when the desire after it is excessive. Multitudes make shipwreck of all that is honorable in character and sweet in the social relations, all that is valuable in time and hopeful of eternity, by this perpetual restlessness, this febrile anxiety. Human possessions are not worth this tumult of thought, this whirl of perplexity, this corroding care. The mere fact that the desire is so insatiable is proof of its folly. Such a morbid and frantic state of mind is an unnatural state. The world to such a man is a sort of sober gambling-house; the interest which he feels in its ordinary employments is a gambler's interest; it stimulates, it consumes him. Disappointed in one pursuit, he only feels a more intense desire to seek his gratification in another; or, if not disappointed, he is still under the same strong irresistible impulse for gratification that is more intense. It is a species of moral infatuation where the world is thus allowed to absorb the thoughts,

awaken the affections and passions, haunt the imagination, and exhaust the mental vigor.

3. Our requests are also unreasonable, in the third place, *when they are unsubmitive*. God's will, and God's way, and God's measure of dispensing his bounty is always best. We feel that there is a demand for our submission under the pressure of trials, and why not the same demand when, in infinite wisdom and love, a divine Providence metes out our mercies? Those who desire and seek blessings in their own measure and their own way, without regard to the measure and way in which he sees fit, ought to be very confident that their own interests are in safe custody in their own keeping. Our desires can not be reasonable unless they are subjected to the will of the only wise God. There must be struggles in that man's bosom; there must be discontent, and distrust, and impatience; there must be a sort of intestine war, and roots of bitterness in the deep recesses of his heart, who can not prefer God's will to his own. Where the heart is tranquil it has but one single will, and that the will of infinite rectitude and goodness. It was a beautiful sentiment of the shepherd of Salisbury Plain when he said, "What pleases God pleases me."

4. And this suggests our fourth remark, that the requests of men are unreasonable *when the happiness they seek is separated from God*. Man

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was made for God. There is nothing that deserves the name of good that is separated from God. Nothing but God can fill the vast desires of the immortal mind. There will be restless longings, perplexing cares, collisions of interests, pangs of disappointment till the soul rests on God. Fallen as they are by their iniquity, men themselves have a secret consciousness of this. Though alienated from him who is the "first Fair and the first Good," yet, in the midst of all their wildest wanderings, they have not lost the impression of their origin or their destination; nor can they dismiss the thought that he is the portion and refuge they need.

Nothing is more obvious, therefore, than that their desires are always unreasonable when the objects they seek after are separated from God. They may pursue the world, and with care and diligence, so long as they do not allow it to take that place in their hearts which belongs to God. But, apart from God, it is but like broken cisterns that hold no water. Give a man honor, pleasure, wealth, fame, apart from God it is the prodigal's portion. If God's favor never cheers the wilderness he traverses, brave its solitude and barrenness as he may, it is cheerless and dark. To make no difference between the precious and the vile; to care not what he enjoys, if so be it relieves his perplexity and gives him present

pleasure; to covet no other portion than that found beneath the skies; to be thinking only of the present, and heedless of the future, and ever panting for good that turns the heart away from God, is to be the slave of desires which nothing can account for but the very enchantment of folly. Such a man would seem to do his utmost to show that he is a mocker at realities. He who has most of the world without God knows best how vain and unsatisfying it is. You may have none of it, and yet be rich in the favor of God; you may have the whole of it, and, without his favor, be miserably poor. Such are all unreasonable requests. We remark,

II. That, *notwithstanding their unreasonableness, such requests are often gratified.*

An earthly parent often gratifies the wishes even of a petulant child, although he knows they are unreasonable. He does so because he loves to gratify his child; it costs him greater effort and a sterner will to refuse than to accede to his requests. Now there is no being in the universe who so loves to give as God. He is the greatest of all givers. His nature is all love and goodness. He hears the ravens when they cry, and the young lions when they wander for lack of meat. He gives his rain to the thirsty and famished earth, cheers its drooping verdure, revives afresh its withered bloom, and restores its de-

nuded beauty. It is so natural for him to give that it costs him effort *not* to give; stern principles they are, and steady purposes that must interpose in order to prevent his *giving*. Life, health, friends, influence, wealth, prosperity, honor, power, animal, intellectual, and spiritual joys, are all from God. Exemption from trial, relief from suffering, deliverance from danger, protection from reproach, alleviation of solicitude, and tranquillity amid the terrors of apprehension, are all from God. He always gratifies the reasonable desires of men, because he appreciates them, and is himself the most reasonable Being in the universe. The gates of prayer are not shut against such petitioners, be they ever so unworthy. His promise is, "Whatsoever ye shall ask."

And not unfrequently he gratifies them when they are *unreasonable*, because the petitioners are so urgent and exacting, and because they will not be denied. The poor widow prevailed with the unjust judge by her *importunity*; and by their impatient and complaining *importunity*, the Israelites in the wilderness persuaded him to grant even their unreasonable requests. He never refuses except for considerations that are absolute and imperative, and such as, if disregarded, compromise his wisdom, his rectitude, or his goodness. He loves to gratify men because they are his creatures, and because he is good unto all,

and his tender mercies are over all his works. If, in our short-sightedness, we question his discretion in thus giving, we should bear in mind that there may be and are important reasons for his so doing. He legislates for the universe, and dispenses his bounty upon principles that are sanctioned by unerring wisdom. The great mass of the inhabitants of our world would be plunged in misery if, for example, God should refuse to gratify those desires which seek a good that is detached from him—which give this world the preference to God himself, and the things of time a preference over things that are unseen and eternal. Who does not see that, if he never granted these unreasonable requests, there would be such scenes of wretchedness as his benevolent mind never yet beheld on his much-loved footstool. No, he could not bear to look upon them. Besides, he often means that his “goodness should lead them to repentance,” and that the gratification of their unreasonable desires should become instrumental of a better mind. He bears with them, knowing that the “long-suffering of God is salvation.” And where this result is not attained, and his goodness and his long-suffering are employed by them in filling up the measure of their iniquity, he means to put them in the wrong, and not allow them to reproach him for *unkindness*. They may never say that they refused to

return to him because he was stern, and unrelenting, and heedless of their wants. On the other hand, he himself means to have this vantage-ground, that, so far from being unkind to them, and though they did nothing but abuse and offend him, and fill up the measure of their iniquity, yet was he doing them good all the while.

In thus gratifying their unreasonable desires, God's object also is to prove them, to try them, and let them see what is in their hearts, and also let the universe see. He sets *all good* before them, the blessings of his grace and the blessings of his providence—the fountains of living waters, and the broken cisterns that hold no water, and calls upon them to make their choice. The government he exercises over them is not merely a government of authority and power, it is a government of *motives*. Those who enlist under it are volunteers in the service. Its great object is to bring out and develop the character of men, and make that character the basis of his own decisions and conduct. One reason, therefore, why he so often gratifies their unreasonable requests, is to let them and others see what the portion is which they themselves select and choose. There is no mechanism in the kingdom of darkness but the mechanism of error and wickedness, and there is no mechanism in the kingdom of God's dear Son but the mechanism of truth and grace. God

forces no man to that which is reasonable or to that which is unreasonable. He treats them as moral beings, and sets before them life and death, the blessing and the curse, and bids them choose life. On this account he holds them responsible, treats them as such, never failing to admonish them of the responsibility and the consequences of their choice.

There is a beautiful illustration of this great principle of the divine jurisprudence in Old Testament history. When the youthful Solomon was about to assume the throne of his father, God appeared to him in a dream of the night, and said unto him, "Ask what I shall give thee." The treasures of earth and heaven were open to him; he had God's warrant to take what he would. He might extend his views, and enlarge his desires as he pleased to one world, or to both worlds. Never had the resources of Infinite Goodness been opened so wide to a worm of the dust before. He had but to specify the gift, and according to his word it should be done unto him. His request was that "*God would give him a wise and understanding heart!*" This was what he felt he most needed. Every thing else was lost sight of. This was the greatest favor he could solicit, because it was one which prepared him to perceive and perform the high duties which were imposed upon him as a man and a prince. God

was as good as his word, and gave him his heart's desire. And he gave more. In giving him this, he gave him that which fitted him to receive other blessings which he did not ask for. And thus the way was open for the great Giver to express and lavish his munificence upon him as it has rarely, if ever, been lavished upon prince or subject.

God virtually makes this proposal to all the sons and daughters of men. He offers them heavenly wisdom and all its attendant blessings; his language to them is, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." If they honestly and truly choose the living God as their refuge and portion, he gives them their desire. He himself becomes their "glory, and the lifter up of their head;" their "shield, and their exceeding great reward;" their friend, their Comforter, and their final rest. If they choose this world as their portion, he is very apt to gratify them. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued as other men. Pride compasseth them about as a chain, and their eyes stand out with fatness. They are clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day. Their dwellings are like the abodes of princes, and their tables are furnished with the products of every sea and shore. Heaven and earth are set before

them, and they have deliberately made their choice. They choose for themselves and for their children only the world. Give us, give us the world! Nothing will satisfy them but the world. And God does not withhold from them their heart's desire. He prefers they should choose a higher good; his bounty, and love, and grace would be more honored and gratified in awarding them a better portion; but, since they refuse the good part which can not be taken from them, he is willing they should have the world. He would fain give them something, and this is the least he has to give. He does not think much of this world; it is of very little account with him, for the fashion of it passeth away, and it will soon melt in the flames that consumes all earthly things. He more usually gives larger portions of it to his enemies than to his friends. They "have their portion in this life;" this is all that he gives them. Nor is there any collusion or circumvention on God's part; he acts honestly, and ingenuously, and kindly toward them. He endeavors, by all the means and motives of his word and providence, to induce them to make a wiser choice. He admonishes them that the objects on which they so unwisely set their hearts will disappoint their expectations. He instructs them that they will turn out like the false waters of the desert; that they are refuges of lies, and

that the hail shall sweep them away; and the most stately fabric of their pride is built upon the sand. With great earnestness and tenderness, he endeavors to dissuade them from their purpose. He tells them, in language as plain as words can utter, that there is nothing enduring and unearthly in what he gives them, and that vanity and vexation of spirit are the sum and substance of all mere earthly joys. Again and again does he utter his solemn protest against their folly, assuring them that riches will not profit them in the day of wrath; that earthly supporters are miserable comforters, earthly titles shadows, and earthly honors but a name. When they rise up and when they lie down, when they go out and when they come in, he is ever addressing to them the expostulation, "Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?" And if, like Israel in the desert, they persist in urging their unreasonable requests, and WILL HAVE this world as their chosen portion, he yields to their request; and in doing this, he does not conceal the fact that they themselves are always the losers by their choice. And this is the

III. Third and last thought suggested by the text, THAT, IN THUS GRATIFYING THE UNREASONABLE REQUESTS OF MEN, HE SENDS LEANNESSE INTO THEIR SOULS.

We have no right to affirm that, in every instance where he grants the unreasonable requests of men, he refuses them spiritual blessings. Far from it. In his abounding mercy, not unfrequently does he surmount the obstacles which prosperity opposes to his gracious designs, neutralizes its fascinating influence, unfolds its vanity and emptiness, and gives the victims of it their spiritual liberty and their eternal crown. It was otherwise with the Israelites in the wilderness, it is otherwise with thousands; such, indeed, are his ordinary dealings with the sons and daughters of men. He "gives them their request, but sends leanness into their souls." This urging and this attaining of unreasonable requests carry with them their own recompense. The effect they have on the mind and character is to fix and establish the influence of earthly enjoyments, and give them supremacy. Reason and conscience are overborne by a carnal and earthly mind, and the issue is, that, subjected to the wild misrule of his own propensities, the worldling eats of the fruit of his own way, and is filled with his own devices. It is not the tendency of the *divine goodness* to produce such a result; it is from the sinful tendencies of the *human heart* under the influence of that goodness. The divine goodness has no such mission of wrath. All its tendencies are subduing and kind; they

would fain lead men to acquaint themselves with him, and it is only by not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance, and resisting these influences, that they are abandoned to themselves. Their spiritual leanness is no act of God's inscrutable sovereignty, but of penal justice and equity. God grants their requests in judgment, and reads them a lesson from their own folly, leaving them with whom all other teaching is of no avail, to learn from their own bitter experience how unwise the choice is to have any other gods before him. While their earthly prospects become bright and attractive, a heavy cloud settles upon all their prospects for eternity. Their bodies flourish, but their souls decay. The immortal intellect, which nothing earth-born can adorn and satisfy, remains unbeautified, and is doomed to want and leanness.

1. Nothing is more obvious, in the first place, than that, by this gratification of their unreasonable requests, the souls of men are apt to become *sadly neglected*.

If the soul be not left in all the deformity of its native pollution; if its aims are ever exalted, its affections purified, and its joys pure, it must not only be cared for, but must often absorb our thoughts, and habitually hold such a place in our estimation as to leave out of sight every other concern. Dead, twice dead must be every right

emotion in that man's bosom who is indifferent to the well-being of his soul. Yet, amid the captivating pursuits and enchanting joys of earth, nothing is more easily forgotten. I say, *forgotten*; for the enormities of wickedness are not necessary to secure spiritual leanness; mere negligence will do that. And what is negligence to the wants of the soul but earnest and prolonged attention to other things? It belongs not to our nature to see the spiritual while we are ever and eagerly looking at the temporal, to care for the immortal while absorbed in the mortal. Amid the wide and widening profusion of earthly bounty, when the present is gay and gladsome, and the future is gilded only with still brighter promises, who thinks of his soul? The more men possess and enjoy of the world, the stronger is their attachment to it apt to be, and the stronger the temptation to spiritual negligence. The world invites their hearts, and they give their hearts to the world; the world solicits their confidence, and they give their confidence to the world; the world proffers them its highest good, and their eager and gratified desires go out after it, till, if it be not so already, it becomes their idol, and then they live on in thoughtlessness of their immortality. They neglect the means of grace and salvation; they cast off fear and restrain prayer; they put far away the evil day; and wherever they

are, and whatever they do, the last subject of their solicitude is the soul. The time was when they thought of God and eternity; but it was under the seeming frowns of Providence, and when the clouds of adversity gathered over them. "When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God." But no sooner was the cloud withdrawn, and the sun of prosperity shone out, than "of the Rock that begat them they were unmindful, and they forgot the God that formed them." Even good men are very apt, in seasons of prosperity, to be cold and careless about their immortality, while wicked and unrepenting men have nothing more to ask for than the full cup of earthly good. "Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." But not only does the soul become thus neglected by this gratification of its unreasonable requests,

2. In the second place, it becomes *degenerate*. It is no well-watered garden, but a barren heath. Flowers and fruit do not grow there, but thorns and briers. That wonderful thing, the soul—more wonderful than gems and stars, and the most wonderful on this fair earth—is never idle. Action and progress are the invariable law of its being. "Evil men and seducers wax worse and

worse, deceiving and being deceived." Wicked as the natural heart is, it is capable of becoming more wicked. If men lived now as long as they did in antediluvian times, we should see depths of moral degeneracy that would make us tremble; and though human life is shortened to threescore years and ten, or fourscore years, we sometimes see degeneracy too enormous to be tolerated. Wicked men, wicked families, wicked communities and nations more usually become most degenerate when their way prospers. They become insensibly confirmed in the habits of an earthly mind. Men who are thus influenced never act agreeably to their natures as accountable agents, nor agreeably to their condition as the expectants of eternity. Never is it more clearly seen that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God," than when, with all their augmented prosperity, augmented force is not only added to their temptations, but there is diminished power to resist them. It is a miracle of mercy if they become not presumptuous and hardened in sin, and learn not only to slight, but *despise* all God's calls, invitations, warnings, and reproofs. The very goodness of God is abused to their abuse of the Giver. There is a proud and lofty independence of heart which is fortified by his bounty. They are tempted to feel that they can live without God. They care not whether they please or

displease him. They do not *mean* to please *him*, but to please *themselves*. The better he treats *them*, the worse they treat *him*. "The God in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways, they have not glorified." And though they rejoice in the smiles of his favors, and his gentleness that made them great, they do but bear themselves loftily, and the only eminence they attain is the "pride that goeth before destruction, and the haughty spirit that goeth before a fall."

3. In the third place, paradoxical as it may seem, in the gratification of its unreasonable requests the soul likewise *becomes unhappy*.

Thus neglected and degenerate, this sensitive being has no substantial joys. She has but to be awake to her real wants in order to see that the very objects she has sought with such inordinate desire plant thorns of disappointment in her bosom. Instead of rest she finds perplexity; instead of the happiness of an immortal mind she finds either a guilty joy or wretchedness. Give her all she asks for, and she is but a bankrupt and a beggar. She is only "seeking the living among the dead." "Delight is not seemly for a fool." The joys he has been so intent upon have turned to ashes, and he himself will one day see that it had been better for him had his restive desires and eager hopes never been realized. Just think of the condition of the soul which has made

the discovery that, amid all the fullness and splendor of earth, she is in want; that, in the midst of all this world can give, there is nothing to impart a ray of consolation when she most needs it; that, of all the goods she has laid up for many years, there is nothing that can purchase a respite from an accusing conscience, or give the agitated bosom an hour's repose. All that remains is her sadness and her apprehensions; a meagre, sickly, miserable existence, "having no hope, and without God in the world." Rich, and increased in goods, and deeming herself in need of nothing, she is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and in want of all things. God gave her her requests. She is satiated with the pleasures of earth; while, amid all this sumptuous misery, her complaint is, "My leanness! my leanness! woe unto me!"

4. We may not suppress a fourth thought, therefore, that, in this gratification of her unreasonable requests, the soul is *too often ruined and lost*. It is a very difficult thing for a man who is distinguished for the possessions and joys of earth to enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is a poisonous atmosphere which he inhales; inebriating joys are they which produce excitement, inflammation, and death. This perpetual stimulus is too great for the soul to endure without jeopardizing her immortality. We do not say that

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such persons may not escape the snare, and that it is impossible for them to enter into God's kingdom, because all things "are possible with God." Yet, when these mountains of prosperity press upon the soul — when every waking, and well-nigh every sleeping hour is employed in the incessant and successful struggle after earth, how hard is it to raise the thoughts and affections to God and heaven! The life of faith is at a great remove from this life of sense. No man can serve God and mammon. "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." If they set their faces toward the spirit-land, they are embarrassed at every step. Their serious resolutions are but for the moment. Instead of finding the way of life, and making any progress toward heaven, they "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown them in destruction and perdition." Amid the pressure of the world and the men of the world, it is no marvel if they are swept away with the nations that forget God. Sport and merriment may be all they care for here; hereafter "their laughter shall be turned into mourning, and their joy into heaviness." God shall set them forth as examples of the folly, the wickedness, and presumption of an earthly and sensual mind. They shall have no lot and no part in the heavenly inheritance; that world of unwasting riches, unfading

glory, and fullness of joy shall not number them among its heirs, nor record their name in its book of life. And will they not exemplify the truth, "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul?"

1. Let us learn, then, from this subject, in the first place, to be *watchful of our desires*. They may be full of danger; and the danger may be, not in their disappointment, but in their gratification. God may grant them, and may smite the blessing he grants. The friends you have loved, and unsubmitively sought after, may prove a snare. The life and health you have idolized may be granted you in judgment. The child over whose couch you have watched with so much anxiety, and for whom you have offered so many importunate and unsubmitive requests, may be spared to chastise your rebellious spirit, to sin and to suffer, and to be the cause of sin and suffering to yourself and others. The poverty you have dreaded may be the allotment you most need, and the wealth you desire may be withheld from you in mercy. The toil and perplexity you complain of may be removed, and the relief and leisure you are looking for may be granted, while you may be the loser. Take heed, then, on what you fix your desires, lest the very gratification of them not only make you miserable, but prove your soul's undoing. You may

obtain what you so eagerly seek after, while better desires and better hopes may wither. Beware of every immoderate, selfish, worldly, and unsubmitive wish. There is but one thing you can safely seek with all fervor and importunity, and that is the favor of God; and this he will give, and no blighting curse shall attend the gift. This you may pant after, and, if he frowns upon your urgency, you may take strong hold of his covenant, and plead with him still. You may grasp the promise as Jacob did at Peniel, and say, No, no; "I will not let thee go until thou bless me!" There is no danger in such seeking. You may not have health, nor wealth, nor pleasure, nor honor in this world; but, if such requests are granted, you will be rich in grace, the fruits of the Spirit within you will be matured and vigorous, and your joys shall be such as a stranger intermeddleth not with. You will stand above this covetous, pleasure-loving world, and look down upon it as far below you. And when the appointed hour comes that brings you to the close of your pilgrimage, barren as the wilderness has been, you will look back upon it with thanks, and with more than thankfulness will look upward to the city of God.

2. Learn also, in the second place, *never to complain when God refuses to grant your requests.* When he declines giving, it is best you should be

refused. Let your desires be subordinate to his will, and you will be happy. Crushing providences may overwhelm you, idol after idol may be smitten to the dust, but it is the Lord, and let him do what seemeth to him good. It will be greatly for your peace and comfort, when you have meekly made known your requests unto him, with trusting confidence to allow him to carve out your lot. You need not be afraid because the world looks dark. He feels an interest in you, and is not an indifferent spectator of your woes. There is no hand like his to wipe away those tears. There is no bosom like his on which it is so sweet to lean. There is no heart like his in which you can so safely trust. You will not complain of God, will you? Oh no. "I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because thou dost it!" It is a dark way in which he sometimes leads those he most loves. But it is he who leads them, and who turns the shadow of death into the morning. No, you will not complain of the ills you suffer, few and slight as they are compared with your ill desert. Why should you desire any thing better than Infinite Wisdom and Love see fit to bestow? Rather than murmur and repine, will you not admire and praise him? Come, shall we not praise him, and exalt his name together? Shall we not sing, as David did, "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 paths of righteousness for his name's sake. He anointeth my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever?"

SERMON III.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

1 JOHN, i., 7.—“*We have fellowship one with another.*”

ONE of the leading articles of the so-called Apostles' Creed is “the communion of saints.” Christians are separated by time and place, by custom and usage, by denominational preferences and different systems of Church government, and by distinct and different Confessions of Faith and different forms and modes of worship. They differ in their localities, and are widely dispersed through different climes, and under different forms of secular and civil power. Their intellectual endowments are various; their religious instructions are marked with peculiarity, and their habits of thinking are in many respects peculiar. Some are ignorant and some are well informed; some are rich and others are poor; some enjoy all the embellishments of cultivated and refined society, and others are unpolished and coarse; some are kings and others are subjects; some are despots and others are vassals; but, if they are *Christians*, they all belong to the sacred community which God has taken out from the world, in

which he dwells, and in which he will dwell for evermore. They "have fellowship one with another."

The subject of the present discourse is one to which our attention is invited by these memorials of the love and sacrifice of our adorable and ever-blessed Lord. It is the fellowship and communion of all the true disciples of Jesus Christ. Our method shall be to specify *the leading elements* of this fellowship, and advert to some of *the means* by which it may be cherished and maintained.

I. Our first object is to specify the leading elements of Christian fellowship.

Men have differed and still differ in their views of the elementary principles of Christian communion, though, one would think, there is little ground for this difference in the subject itself. We can not unite the people of God if his word separates them; we may not separate them if his word makes them one. There are moral distinctions which we may not lose sight of, and there are moral assimilations which we are under obligations to recognize and defend. The following facts appear to us to be clearly revealed in the Scriptures as presenting the elements and the basis of Christian fellowship:

1. In the first place, all Christians *are one in Christ*.

Just here their communion begins. Christ is the vine, they are the branches. They live only as he lives in them—only as his life is infused into and interpenetrates theirs. They are withered branches if they abide not in him.

The union of the divine and human natures in his person, and the fact that the Holy Spirit was given to him “without measure,” constitute him the source and reservoir from which, and the channel through which a new and divine life flows into the soul. By that “faith which is of the operation of God” they become one with him. They dwell in him, and he dwells in them. They “are an habitation of God through the Spirit.” In a high and important sense, Christ himself is the Church. The Church has no existence without him; and he, as the Mediator, has no existence without the Church. He is the Head, and they are the members. When he assumed our nature, it was that he might become one with his Church; when he suffered on the cross, he suffered for his Church, and his Church suffered in him; when he ascended up on high, and gave gifts unto men, it was “for the edifying of the body of Christ.” He calls the Church his sister, his *spouse*. She belongs to him; she is his; his body, the “fullness of him that filleth all in all.” Without the Church he has no fullness, no body; and without him the body is but a dead carcass.

The Apostle John, in the Apocalypse, speaks of the Church, in her perfected character, as a "glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" he represents her as a "bride prepared for her husband." The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, speaks of the union between Christ and believers as a matrimonial union. He calls upon husbands to love their wives because they are "their own bodies; they are no more twain, but one flesh." Christ loves the Church because it is his body. In the strong language of the apostle, "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." And then he says, "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." Not only is he a partaker of our flesh and blood, but we are partakers of his; not physically, but spiritually; it is a *vital* union. We are not literally partakers of his flesh and his bones, but partakers of his life, of all that in him which communicates life. There is a community of life. He lives, therefore his Church live; "because I live, ye shall live also." It was in view of this vital and everlasting union that the Savior uttered those memorable words in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may *be one*, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they

also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they *may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one!*" Wonderful, most wonderful words! They are complete as one body in him "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named;" for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Bishop Hall's comment on this passage is this: "Thou, O Father, art in me as Mediator, and I am in them by my Spirit, working effectually in them to unite them perfectly in one, both in themselves and in us." One on earth and one in heaven! This will be the consummation of that wondrous work which God purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of "the fullness of time he might *gather together in one all things in Christ*, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in him," reconciling all things to himself by the blood of the cross. Then will be realized, from every holy creature in the universe, the declaration of the exiled apostle, "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!

All believers are one in Christ ; this is the primordial element of their communion. As the fruit of this union, there are,

2. In the second place, in *all real Christians substantially the same views of God's truth*. We say *substantially*, because there are truths which are not only so fundamental that they lie at the foundation of the Gospel, but so essential that they must be received in order to salvation. The truth of God is in every view pleasant to the Christian mind ; it is in its own nature fitted to excite and nourish all those affections in which genuine piety consists. "If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in *darkness*, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the *light*, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." This is the apostle's reasoning in the paragraph which contains the text. No doubt there are truths, the rejection of which may be proof of impiety in some which would not be proof of impiety in others, because all good men have not the same capacity, nor the same means of information, nor the same exemption from misapprehension and mistake. And, for the same reasons, there are errors which, while they may indicate impiety in some minds, do not necessarily imply it in others. Good men love the truth of God just so far and just so soon as they *perceive* it. It is no mark of true piety to

see and reject any truth which God has revealed. It is written, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." Genuine Christians know that the great principles of the Gospel are true, not only because they credit the testimony of their Author, but by their own experience. "He that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself." The Bible attributes error to a disobedient spirit. "If *any* man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

This universal sympathy of holy minds in those truths that are essential to vital godliness forms an essential element of their fellowship. Mind here mingles with mind, thought responds to thought, and joy unites with joy. The streams flow from one fountain, they flow together, and they flow on in unrippled serenity. It is recorded of the early Christians that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' *doctrine* and fellowship;" that they were of "one accord," and had "great gladness and singleness of heart."

The harmony of the *visible* Church has been and is disturbed by nothing so extensively as by the diversity in her views of truth. In more respects than one she has been emphatically the Church *militant*. Her internal history has been, in no small degree, a narrative of conflicting opinions—of creed arrayed against creed, altar against altar, Church against Church, council against

council, secession against secession, and schism against schism. And though this mournful fact seems to be in collision with the position we are maintaining, may we not rather regard it as confirming that position, and only indicating the impossibility of any coalescence of God's truth with radical error? While we well know that there are doctrinal views that are too heterogeneous and discordant to coalesce, and that such coalescence, would be sin, yet is it a delightful fact that, with all her conflicting elements, the Church of God, as a body, has come forth from these internal conflicts stronger than ever in the unity of her doctrines. This fact is apparent from the harmony of the Confessions of Faith of the different reformed churches, and it is a fact that calls for devout gratitude, and stands before the world as proof that, though from differently shaped goblets, they "all drink into the same spirit." It is not more true that every holy mind receives the truth of God, than that it has fellowship with other minds which receive it. It is an axiom in the exact sciences that "things which agree with another and the same thing agree with each other." It is equally true in moral science. The views of some may be less extended than the views of others; but, so far as they extend, they are not only harmonious, but identified. The mass is homogeneous, and constitutes a commu-

nity, all the parts of which are mutually attracted by the truth of God. No matter by what name he is called, every true Christian is an "epistle of Christ, known and read of all men." If you could read all his thoughts, you would see the truth of God written on his heart, not with pen and ink, but with the Holy Ghost. He has this impress, heart answering to heart as truly as the wax to the seal.

3. A third element of Christian fellowship is found in the fact *that all Christians possess essentially the same spiritual character*. Though sinners still, their character is not purely sinful; they are different from what they once were; the marks of the universal apostasy are gradually disappearing and becoming obliterated by the tokens of a spiritual renovation. Whatever other forms and badges distinguish them, they are all "born of God;" they bear "the image of the heavenly," and are the adopted ones of the Lord God Almighty. In this they differ from the world that lieth in wickedness, and from all those who have the mere form of godliness. There is not one among them all who does not fear God and love his Son, and in this they resemble one another. It is this moral resemblance, this unity of heart, which binds them together.

In this heaven-born and heaven-sustained spirit they hold mutual fellowship. It is not in their

religious profession simply that they are alike, but in their religion. Their love of God, their repentance, their self-abasement, their "good fight of faith," and their heaven-aspiring affections are essentially the same. The purity and loftiness of their sentiments are not all equal in degree, nor are they uniform in the same individuals, yet do none of them fail of their high calling. Their piety shines with varying lustre, yet do they all give proof of their heavenly birth. Sin is no longer their element. In the same measure in which they are Christians, they love what God loves, and abhor what he abhors. They are living exemplifications of the power of godliness. Just in the proportion in which they are sanctified, every truth and every duty—every claim upon their grateful affections and devotement—every object of gracious affection, excites within them the same hallowed emotions; and as these hallowed emotions prevail, all discordant affections are suppressed and eradicated, and they have fellowship one with another.

There is no stronger bond of Christian communion, and no sweeter bond, than this attraction of heart toward the appropriate objects of Christian affection. There are elements of union in all such minds which no human systems, and no lines of external demarkation can destroy or confound. There is a new and divine life; there is

a heart that beats ; there are spiritual sympathies which, because they no longer alienate man from God, no longer alienate the Christian from the Christian. Disunion is the work of sin ; union is the work of grace. Enmity is the work of the adversary. Christ came on an errand of love, to destroy the works of the devil, to reconcile man to God, and to make his people one.

4. There is also, in the fourth place, among all real Christians, *a community of their highest and best interests*. Sin, in its nature, is selfish and unsocial. All "seek their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's." It is true that this anti-social and suspicious spirit is often modified and held in check even by its supreme egotism ; yet, where it is unrestrained, it always engenders pride, malice, and envy. Those who are under its dominion are the vassals of a narrow and contracted mind, the slaves of self-interest ; and, for the most part, their interests are conflicting, and watched with unsleeping caution and jealousy, because they come in perpetual collision, and because there is no great and common pursuit, no high, paramount object which, in their estimation, rises above their own, and absorbs and swallows up every other interest.

The Christian has, in this respect, greatly the advantage over the men of the world. He has a peculiar spirit ; it belongs to his character to

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aim at higher interests than his own. Wherever he is, and of whatever name and land, he bears relations not to himself only, but to others—relations which he and they understand and appreciate, and the obligations of which it is the great object of true religion to fulfill. They are not the interests of a sect or party, nor are they the symbols of a circumscribed community. His aim is expansive, and his objects are lofty and noble. He “glories only in the cross of Christ.” It is a decaying religion, and there are already upon it the symptoms of death, which does not identify itself with the great objects which lie so near the heart of Infinite Love, and for which God spared not his own Son. Do you ask what these objects are? I answer, they are the glory of God in the salvation of men, the purity and enlargement of his spiritual kingdom, and the triumph of truth and rectitude in our sinful world. Every Christian is pursuing these great objects; and, where they are seen in their true worth and importance, every minor and selfish pursuit is made subservient to this comprehensive and benevolent end.

This is one of the elements of Christian sympathy and fellowship; it is a communion that rests upon the identity of the highest and best interests. Minor peculiarities Christian men may assume; but, in the great and ulterior end of their

existence, they have no peculiarity. In this they are one, and in this their union is indissoluble. The magnitude and glory of the objects to which they are devoted constitute their honor and happiness. Their best interests flourish only as the interests of their Divine Master's kingdom flourish. In nothing have they sweeter or nobler fellowship. They breathe the same elastic atmosphere; their hearts throb with the same healthful action; their range of thought, desire, and purpose is one. And, though each may pursue this high calling in his own way, they have all one mind and heart. There is no disunion, nor any strife, nor evil work. No community exists on the face of the earth where there is such singleness of eye and unity of design. Nor can this great principle of saintly communion be violated unless by ignorance or misapprehension, or unless, by some subtle movement of the great Adversary, good men are unhappily thrown into a false position. The foundation of their fellowship is deep and broad as that "kingdom which can not be moved."

5. In the fifth place, all Christians also possess *the same sources of enjoyment*. They draw the waters of life and salvation from the same fountains. The streams are various, and the channels are cut by different hands, and in variegated and meandering forms; but the source is one. Like

the rays of the sun, they assume all the prismatic colors ; but they are emitted from one common centre. All truly spiritual joys are the fruit of the same spirit, and, although they grow on different branches of the tree of life, they all proceed from the same stock. Are the consciences of good men tranquil, and the terrors of apprehension subdued, it is from a view of the bleeding Lamb of God. Are their hopes the same precious hopes, it is because they centre in the same objects, rest on the same foundation, and are sustained by the same grace. The same holy influences sanctify them ; the same means and motives instruct and comfort them ; and they are all made joyful in their increasing conformity to God. Though pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and exposed to innumerable dangers, the same God is their refuge and strength, their glory, and the lifter up of their heads. Their fellowship is with the Father, to whom they have access by one Spirit through Jesus Christ. Their duties and their toil are sources of enjoyment, and they are substantially the same. Serenity and joy are inmingled with their most self-sacrificing labors, because their meat is to do the will of him that sent them, and finish his work. By how much the more they are devoted to the service of God, by so much do they receive grace for grace, take a firmer hold of the prom-

ises, and rejoice the more in hope of the glory of God. From their very trials they draw consolation, and their own experience verifies the assurance, "all things are yours," because they hold all under the same Head and by the same tenure, as "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." They have common enemies, but the same Leader, and the same joyful and triumphant victories.

In joys like these they have sweet fellowship, and many a song of holy praise. They form one and the same society, every one of which, the more he is assimilated in thought, in affection, in interest, is the more united in pure and holy enjoyment, thus completing their fellowship.

Such are the elements of Christian fellowship — the basis on which it rests. The remaining topic which we proposed to consider, and which forms,

II. The second division of our subject, relates to the means by which this communion of saints may be cherished and maintained.

We can not but feel that the divisions in the Christian Church are an evil, a great evil, and greatly to be deplored. Her enemies look at her tattered robes, and say as the weeping prophet said, "From the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed." Something is due from an aged minister of the Gospel to the cause of truth, and

holiness, and brotherly love, that may have a tendency, at least, to remedy this evil. There is no doubt that better days and brighter scenes are to dawn upon the Church—days in which “Ephraim shall no longer envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim”—scenes in which her discordant views shall become harmonious, and throughout all her borders she shall “see and flow together, and her heart shall fear and be enlarged.” The time is not far distant when the clouds of heavenly mercy will descend more largely upon the earth, and when not only will the nations “learn war no more,” but the Church will learn to “keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” We have sometimes thought that all attempts to draw more closely the bonds of Christian fellowship are of no sort of use, and that we must wait in silence and inaction for the fulfillment of the prediction, “Upon the land of my people shall come up briers and thorns, yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city, until the Spirit be poured from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field.” Yet we have no reason to believe that, in producing such a result, God will depart from the ordinary procedure of his grace, but will rather put honor upon the means and instrumentalities of his own ordaining. The Church of God and her ministry have therefore, as it seems to us, something to do, and some re-

sponsibility in promoting an enlarged and unembarrassed communion and fellowship. On this part of our subject we take leave to submit the following considerations:

1. In the first place, Christians of every name *should be on their guard, on the one hand, against an exclusive bigotry, and, on the other, against an unchristian liberalism.*

These are the two extremes to which good men have been and are exposed. We reluctate at a divisive spirit, and not less at that misnamed charity which advocates union at the expense of principle. The Church of God needs an exercised conscience in this matter. That latitudinarianism which makes no difference between "the precious and the vile," and that rigor and severity which exclude every thing from our fellowship that is not in accordance with our own views, are both remote from the spirit of the Gospel.

There is a limit beyond which Christian charity has no warrant to extend its fraternal confidence. We may not call evil good, nor good evil; nor put darkness for light, nor light for darkness. It is the glory of the Church that she is an uncompromising advocate for God's truth. She may not hold communion with false religions, nor burn incense on their altars. She stands separate and aloof from every thing that is not Christian. Truth and error, holiness and

sin, can never meet on common ground. We can not, because we may not, confound these distinctions. The God of love, himself "the great essential charity," does not receive as true Christians the enemies of truth and righteousness, and he does not require us to be more charitable than himself.

Yet, while we say this, let it not be supposed that we are satisfied with this limited view. It is a one-sided view, and needs completeness to make it Christian. After all, there is such a thing as Christian charity. Good men, as before remarked, may differ in views and usages that are neither fundamental to the Gospel nor essential to pure and undefiled religion. And where they thus differ, there is the appropriate sphere of action and influence of that charity which "hopeth all things, believeth all things, thinketh no evil, and never faileth." If they are one in Christ; if they possess essentially the same spirit all the world over; if they have a common Master, and are loyal subjects of the same kingdom; if they have a common Father, and belong to the same family, then are the things in which they agree so many more, and so much more important than the things in which they differ, that they constitute one spiritual community, and have a real, substantial, and spiritual fellowship. One collection of Christians may prefer to be governed

by the whole body of Church members, and another may prefer a government that is representative in its form and character; another may choose that its authority should be purely prelat-ical, and concentrated in a single man; yet all of them may acknowledge the laws of Christ. One may stand in prayer, and another may prefer a kneeling posture; one may receive the Lord's Supper sitting at a table, and another may receive it kneeling at the altar; yet all of them may worship God in spirit and in truth. One may be baptized by sprinkling or affusion, and another by immersion; yet are all baptized by the application of water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. One may be persuaded that the Psalms of David are the only vehicle of praise, and another may make use of psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. One may limit its praise to the Psalms in a literal version, another may give preference to a version that is more liberal and poetic. One may be canonically bound to the observance of festivals and fasts, and another may celebrate them occasionally and at its discretion. One may believe that the vast plan of God's universal creation is the best possible plan, and that it can not be altered or amended for the better; another may believe that it is simply wise and good; while both may rejoice in his supreme and uni-

versal government. One may regard the doctrine of the divine decrees as a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel; another may exclude this doctrine because he can not understand it; while both prefer God's will to their own. One may believe that all mankind are condemned *for* the sin of Adam; another, that they are condemned *through* the sin of Adam; while both believe that the sin of Adam is visited upon the race. One may believe that men are moral agents from their birth, and are by nature children of wrath; another, that they come into the world without any taint of moral corruption; while both believe that all men are sinners. One believes that regeneration consists in imparting a new spiritual nature, and implanting in the soul a new taste or principle; another may believe that it consists simply in imparting new and gracious exercises and emotions. One may believe that men are regenerated by the Spirit of God acting directly upon the mind and heart; another, that they are regenerated and sanctified by the same divine agency acting upon the truth; while both believe that regeneration is a radical and necessary change of character, accomplished by supernatural power. One may believe in the final perseverance of the saints; another may believe that they may so fall away as finally to perish; while both believe that there is no salvation without continued perseverance.

One may believe that Christ died for all men; another, that he died only for the elect; while both believe that there is infinite sufficiency in his atonement, and that the offers of pardon and life are made to every hearer of the Gospel and upon the same revealed conditions. One believes that justification consists in the pardon of sin; another that, in addition to the pardon of sin, it reinstates the sinner in a legal righteousness. One believes in justification by works; another, in justification by faith; while both believe that the pardoned are accepted only in the Beloved, are justified freely by his grace, through a faith that is productive of good works.

In this induction of particulars we say not there is no difference; nor that the difference is not important; nor that the language is not exceptionable in which these errors are expressed. In some of these items the difference is not so much in the *facts themselves* as in the *human philosophy which explains them*. Where there exists an agreement in the great facts of Christianity, men may disagree in their philosophy without breaking fellowship. Not a few of the divisions in the Church of God have arisen from their differences in forms and modes of worship, and their different methods of explaining the great facts revealed in the Bible by their own philosophy.

It is easy to see that there can be no Christian

fellowship where persons of these varying views are influenced by an exclusive bigotry or an anti-Christian liberalism. The difficulty lies in drawing the line between them, and at the same time standing upon the ground of a true faith and a true charity. We may not "curse whom the Lord hath not cursed," nor bless whom the Lord hath not blessed. The position occupied by the writers of the New Testament on this subject is perfectly plain. They instruct us that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" that "circumcision is nothing," and that "uncircumcision is nothing," but that "the new creature" is every thing. Nor do they hesitate in saying, "*Peace* be to them that walk according to *this rule*, and to all the *Israel of God*!" This is the New Testament law of Christian fellowship. There is a religion that God accepts. It is substantially the religion that is found in heaven, and that accords with the word and will of God. It is a religion in which all good men enjoy fellowship, whether they know it or not. No matter where it is found, nor by what name it is called, nor what, nor how many its non-essential peculiarities, it is the religion of the Gospel—it is the life of faith in the Son of God—it is Christ in the soul the hope of glory; and where Christ is recognized, the Christian is not discarded.

There is a cure for the unsocial and dissociating influence of these two extremes—this iron, Procrustean standard, on the one hand, and this rope of sand on the other—in a mind well balanced by the great truths of the Gospel, and largely imbued with the spirit of Christ.

2. We remark, in the second place, that, in order to promote extended Christian fellowship, Christians of every name *must recognize the claims of true piety wherever they exist.*

It is an office of no small delicacy to sit in judgment upon the piety of others. It is indeed a very questionable, if not a perilous office. When I detect myself in calling in question the piety of those whose external conduct is in accordance with Christian morality and decency, I am rebuked by those words of my divine Master, "Judge not, that ye be not judged!" It is much easier for us to "behold the mote that is in our brother's eye" than "to cast out the beam that is in our own eye." An intolerant spirit is out of place every where. If the claims of piety were inseparable from the Church of Geneva, or the Church of England, or the Church of Scotland, or the churches of the Puritans, it would be no difficult matter to indicate who are and who are not entitled to the fellowship of the saints. Both good men and bad men are to be found in every department of the visible Church.

And even could we distinguish between the tares and the wheat, it is the bidding of the Master that "they should both grow together until the harvest." That rashness which ventures to affirm that *ours* is the only true Church, out of whose communion there is, in ordinary cases, no piety and no salvation, is most certainly not one of the ingredients of a Christian spirit. We may judge severely of ourselves, of others charitably. The Scriptures do not speak in very measured terms of rebuke of those who say, "Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou." We look with deeper concern on those who venture on such presumption than on the objects of their exclusiveness. Even did we give the preference to their ecclesiastical organization and modes of worship, this mere *exclusiveness* would neutralize and chill all those preferences. A generous and honorable Christianity revolts from all such unchristian assumption. There is but one way to heaven, and all good men are walking in that way. We need not be blind to their errors, nor ought we to shut our eyes upon their virtues. It is not for us to decide how little religion a man may have and yet be a Christian. It requires no sacrifice of truth, no compromise of principle, no unscriptural concessions of any kind, to give our suspicions to the wind. Suspicion is the bane of Christian fellowship. It is no part of true re-

ligion to be suspicious of the religion of others ; such suspicions are the "evil surmisings of men of corrupt minds." Where neither fundamental errors, nor persevering immorality, nor incorrigible neglect of divine ordinances forbid it, I would give every professed Christian my confidence. "The Son of Man came to seek and save that which is lost;" and the man, be he who or where he may, who humbly commits the concerns of his immortality into his hands, knowing whom he has believed, is a Christian. Let him be called by what name he will, he is a Christian ; "for him to live is Christ, and for him to die is gain." The Savior said to his followers, "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved *me*." God loves such a man, and I will love him. God holds communion with such a man, and I will hold communion with him. If he is good enough for the Lord's table, he is good enough for ours.

It is a reproach to some who serve at God's altars that there are those who are called of God to the ministry of his Son with whom they can not hold fellowship in the official duties of the sanctuary ; and it is a reproach to some branches of the Church of Christ that they exclude from *their* communion table those whom Christ invites and makes welcome to *his*. Beloved brethren, how preposterous is all this ! Let us not forget that those who are not called by our name may

be as ardent friends of Christ as we ourselves; that they may be doing his work as effectually as we; that they may be fighting the good fight of faith under his banners, if not ours; that his enemies may be their enemies, and his cause their cause; and that many an unpretending stranger to our altars may follow the Savior more closely than we. There never was, and there never will be, a perfect Church in this fallen world. There is no Church that may set itself up as a complete and perfect model to all other churches, and say that there is no such thing as divinely warranted Christian fellowship out of its own communion. If the Church with which I have so long had the honor to be associated should act and speak thus, I could not, in good conscience, remain in her communion another day. I know of no greater heresy than this unchurching dogma. With all humility, I say to the few denominations of Christendom who teach this doctrine, Show us from the Bible that other churches must agree in all things *with you*. What do you require more than that men, as lost sinners, should flee to Jesus Christ for refuge, and confess him before the world as the only name given under heaven whereby they must be saved? Must they confess *your* name as well as that of their divine Lord? Do you do right in setting up *your* standard by the side of the cross?

3. A third thought we may not suppress on this part of our subject. The communion of saints can not be successfully cherished without *a more intimate acquaintance with the different departments of Christ's visible kingdom.*

Not more certainly do travelers, as they pass over this broad earth, and visit its continents and remote islands, find something in the character of the inhabitants that is *human*, than Christians, when they inmingle with the various tribes and families of God's Israel, find something that is *Christian*. They may be scandalized by some offensive peculiarities, but they are charmed by the sympathies of a common Christianity. And these latter are the things which they love; these are they with which they hold communion. They find them the same; in the most imperfect denomination of real Christians they find the same Bible, and therefore the same "knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." Forty-three years ago, I was present at a meeting for prayer at the house of Dr. Andrew Read, in the environs of London, composed of clergymen of different lands, different denominations, and different creeds, and I found that, in whatever other particulars they differed, they all agreed in their *prayers*. Never shall I forget the prayer of the world-famed Tholuck, of Germany. "Grant us, O Lord," said this beloved man,

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“Grant us, O Lord, a new revival of old faith and old charity!” I felt that I was *at home*, uniting without embarrassment in the supplications of my brethren in Christ from both continents and from the isles of the sea. The lesson inculcated by these few hours of devotional intercourse was such as is never to be obliterated from my own mind. The proof was positive and perfect that good men of every name and land are one in Christ. And never did I more deeply feel that the barriers which separate the one Church of the living God ought to be broken down.

When we read extensively the biography of good men of discordant views in doctrine, and opposing habits of Church polity, our minds are instinctively led to the same result. We see how they lived and how they died; and we marvel that men, who were so qualified to hold communion with one another in heaven, were satisfied to keep each other at such arm’s length on the earth. Whitfield and Wesley, antipodes in theology, lived and died in the same spiritual zone. Toplady and Fletcher, the former the ablest and most unflinching advocate of Calvinism of his age, and the latter the most brilliant Arminian, lived and died amid all the triumphs of a victorious faith. The light of heaven that shone upon them in the dark valley, and that melted away in its inmingled beams as it conducted these lovely and co-

alescing spirits to the realms of eternal day, was the same light, from the same Sun.

The melancholy fact is, Christians know very little of Christians. "The world knoweth *us* not," said one of the most affectionate of Christ's disciples, "because it knew *him* not." If they knew their Lord more, they would know and love one another better. The noble and delightful efforts of Christians of different names, in the age in which we live, to disseminate over the earth the Word of God, and to circulate a Christian literature, and their united efforts for the sanctification of the Lord's day, have done much to tear away the veil of mutual ignorance. The religious press has done much in this work of charity; but much remains yet to be done. The great body of the churches of our common Lord know well-nigh as little of one another as though they occupied different hemispheres.

We do not complain of the existence of the mere lines of denominational distinction. Let them exist, if you will; it may be the efficiency of the Church is promoted by them. But we ask that they may not obliterate an unembarrassed and generous intercourse. They may be good neighbors, though they do not dwell in the same house; and they may perform and interchange all the offices of mutual kindness and good neighborhood, though each occupies his

own apartment. If Christianity ever makes its way in this hostile world, Christians of every name will better understand Christians of every name; and when they do this they will "love one another with a pure heart fervently."

Nor is it possible for us to do this without the opportunity and means of forming a judgment of their character, and giving them the opportunity and means of forming a judgment of ours. Christian knowledge and Christian love will exert more influence in uniting the people of God than all their outward and minor differences can exert in disuniting them. If our knowledge of one another goes no farther than to convince us that those who are bought by the same blood, led by the same Spirit, walk by the same rule, aim at the same prize, and are heirs of the same promises and the same inheritance, belong to the same household of faith, and ought not to be estranged from one another, it will prove an edifying attainment and a bond of union stronger than that which is constituted by any external forms or organization. Christians every where would be thus gradually assimilated in lesser matters, and, even where these minor differences remain, a Christian spirit would generate and foster so much gentleness, and amiableness, and courteousness, and confidence of deportment, that their fellowship would be their joy, and their most cap-

tious enemies would be constrained to say of them, "See how these Christians love one another!"

In the conclusion of our discourse, we shall do great injustice to you and to ourselves if we fail to employ the thoughts which have been suggested in cherishing those sentiments of mutual esteem and attachment which ought to be brought into action by the communion of the professed people of God. This is one of the objects of that benevolent arrangement which gathers around the communion-table a peculiar people, baptized by the Spirit of his Son. When the social affections become Christian, they lose their unhallowed selfishness. The Church of God is not only founded on religious principles, and designed to promote religious objects, but is also designed to promote religious attachments, and does, in fact, constitute the visible and bright chain which binds together the friends of truth and holiness. There is a secret affinity between all regenerated minds that is here developed in progressive maturity, and becomes ripe for the fellowship of the "general assembly and Church of the First-born." The "cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all par-

takers of that one bread." The law of Christ's house is the law of love—love to him and love to one another. This is the revealed condition of access to the privileges of the Lord's Supper. My dear brethren, there must be no "old leaven" of malice, unkindness, or suspicion cherished here. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." He "that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Where this spirit is wanting, the glory of the Church is departed. "Hereby," says the Savior, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

It gives interest to the communion of the saints that it has its consummation beyond the grave. The delights of it never will be fully enjoyed until "the marriage of the Lamb is come," and the assembled guests "eat and drink at his table in his kingdom." Fellowship that is so imperfect, and, alas! so often alloyed here, shall there be perfect and pure. Here, mingled with sighing and tears; there, renewed, where sighing and sorrow shall flee away; here, interrupted by disease, infirmity, and death; there, perpetuated in all the freshness of its joy. You have seen enough of earth to know that "this is not your

rest," and you have thought and believe enough of heaven, and so often anticipated its fellowship, that from the heart you can say, "I would not live always." If longing to depart and be with Christ formed a more distinctive feature in the piety of other days, let us learn from them to be better Christians, and to have more love to Jesus and to those he loves. We shall think more of heaven when we have more of this spirit, and shall have more sympathy with its fellowship and its joys. We shall sometimes sigh and pant for it, and in the favored hours of our solitary communion with God, as well as in the blessed seasons of our social fellowship, we shall say with the poet, as he was looking within the veil, and heard the song of angels that stand round the throne, and saints that stand nearer than they,

"I want to put on my attire,
Wash'd white in the blood of the Lamb;
I want to be one of your choir,
And tune my sweet harp to his name.

"I want—oh, I want to be there,
Where sorrow and sin bid adieu;
Your joy and your friendship to share,
To wonder and worship with you."

SERMON IV.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

JOB, xxxv., 10.—“*Where is God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?*”

THERE are sorrows under the pressure of which every heart that is human instinctively feels that its refuge is in God. Even when this “strong tower” is dimly seen and in the distance, pensiveness and despondency give place to hope. They may be plaintive notes which sorrow utters, but they are not then the voice of despondency.

In the paragraph which contains the text, the writer is rebuking the practical atheism of those who live “without God in the world,” and the barrenness, the hopelessness of such a life. Just views of the divine Being and Presence, even in the darkest hours, would fill their hearts with joy and their lips with praise. But they had no such refuge. “None saith, Where is God, my Maker, who giveth *songs in the night?*” God, my Maker, that giveth songs in the night. It is a sweet thought. We are not so abandoned of comforters, nor so wrapped in silence and gloom, as to have *no* sources of joy even in the most overshadow-

owed passages of the wilderness. In expanding and illustrating this thought, we remark,

I. In the first place, *there is a night in the world of nature* that is vocal with songs.

The light of this exterior creation is the emblem of truth, of purity, of heaven, of the Deity himself. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." We love to look upon the bright sunlight. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." All nature rejoices—revels in the light of day. The animal and vegetable world sicken and die, incarcerated in darkness; they verge toward the light, though it be but a single beam twinkling on their obscure abode. In all its rich variety, from the green grass to the gorgeous flower, from the sparkling dew-drop to the foaming cataract, the world of nature loses its beauty and grandeur when shrouded in midnight darkness, or even veiled by a passing cloud.

Yet who does not admire that adjustment of the "ordinances of heaven" which eclipses and for a time shuts out the light of day? There are seasons when the eye is wearied by beholding earth's vanities. The mind itself would fain be employed amid less distracting and gentler scenes, and, like Milton in his blindness or Bunyan in his dungeon, would repose amid the creations of its own fertile and hallowed imagination. The

dark night is the *time* for thought. "I will meditate on thee in the night-watches." The conflicting world then is still. The dazzling robes of nature are laid aside. The verdant vale is mantled. The mountain-top is seen only in dim and shadowy outline, and the variegated earth is a colorless plain. Even the practical atheist then feels that God his Maker is no longer a "God that hideth himself," but is every where "decked with light as with a garment, and arrayed in majesty and excellency."

Oh, how full of God is the still, dark night! We see not how a contemplative mind can gaze upon the silent and gemmed heavens without impressive thoughts of Him who there "binds the sweet influences of Pleiades, looses the bands of Orion, brings forth Mazaroth in his season, and guides Arcturus with his sons." The great Invisible is then walking abroad amid the quiet earth and the spangled heavens, while the flitting clouds throw their drapery around his throne. Every sound dies away but breathing silence; and then every whispering breeze, and rustling leaf, and rippling stream is vocal. Yes, how full of God, from the well-formed constellation to the crowded Milky Way—from the Northern Star to the Southern Cross—from the floating insect to the full moon! What subjects of sublime and sacred contemplation are here, and how do they

elevate the mind above the groveling passions and pursuits of time! How do they subdue it to plaintive gentleness and devout admiration! How do they clothe proud man with the conscious abjectness of a worm, yet tell him of his immortality! How do they raise the soul to HIM, the immensity of whose being lies back, far back and above all created things, HIMSELF THE GREAT ALL IN ALL!

It is, indeed, the hour of prayer; and is it not also the hour of *praise*? Heavenly warders keep their vigils over the sleeping earth, and heavenly music soothes its slumbers.

“Soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.”

Nor are they surpassed by the glee of men under the cheering splendor of meridian day. They are hymns of gladness; millions of suns, even from the outer verge of man's telescopic vision, uttering their songs to him whose “glory covers the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise.”

II. There is, in the second place, a night that is vocal with songs *in the moral world*.

The history of this world of moral and accountable agents begins with the bright record, “So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him.” It was the daylight of his being, the morning of his joy. A seraph finger might well sweep the strings that

ushered in that cloudless day. It was the blushing dawn of the new-born week of time; the early spring of the earthly paradise, in all its freshness, celebrated by the morning stars as "they sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

With the dark night that so soon followed we are all, alas! too familiar. The poison that so deeply steeped the root of the race, distilled its venom upon all the branches. "By the offense of one, judgment came upon *all*." It was a fearful blow:

"Earth felt the wound;
And nature, sighing from her seat,
Gave signs of woe that all was lost!"

From that hour it was a world-wide apostasy, and, so far as created wisdom could perceive, it was a total and enduring eclipse of all the hopes of men.

Yet were there heaven-imparted songs in that dark night of this lost world. No sooner was the shock of the first apostasy felt, than the bright promise was revealed that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; and though, under the flickering hopes excited by this enigmatical announcement, dark shadows were still stretched across entire generations and overlay the habitations of men, the promise itself progressively received more and still more intelli-

ble accessions, and a more full development, until the harp of Isaiah sounded out the song, "Unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given," and the joyous proclamation was echoed from the hill-country of Judea, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto us is born a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

The history of the past was a melancholy history. The growing population of the patriarchal age was held in bondage, and the prince and powers of darkness were triumphant. The teachings of heavenly wisdom were lost sight of in the dreams of pagan idolatry; the dubious and lying oracles of a blinded priesthood, and the flitting phantoms of a cruel and sensual superstition, took the place of revealed truth; the commandments of God were superseded by the traditions of men; and Jew and Gentile, though worshipping at different altars, breathed the same suffocating atmosphere. Moral darkness had never extended itself so far; nor was it ever so intense and appalling; nor were religion and morals, and every vestige of truth and piety, ever so near being obliterated as at that hour when "God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons." Israel's King and Zion's Deliverer was there cradled in Bethlehem's manger; and while

the glad tidings were yet upon the lips of the herald angel, "suddenly there was with him a multitude of the heavenly hosts, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will to men!" It was a song that broke in upon the world's gloom and cheered its darkness. Jacob's star, the star of Bethlehem, gilded that dark night, and the harps of heaven announced that God descended to dwell with men. And when the Savior hung on the cross, what an hour was that? the darkest hour the world ever saw; yet it gave birth to all the songs of the redeemed, and they are the songs which, with their manifold variations, have been recognized in the formularies, chanted in the liturgies, and, in simpler and sweeter tones, sung in Zion's temples; and from that hour to the present the morning and evening breeze have been wafting it to far-off land and sea.

There have been periods in the world's history when its generations were overlaid by "darkness that might be felt." In every zone, and on every line of longitude from the rising to the setting sun, "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." Yet were there even in those dark nights glad songs of salvation here and there ascending, and ever vocal with halleluiahs to God and the Lamb. Throughout all the struggles of the Church under the severe perse-

cutions of pagan Rome, her songs rose triumphant from the scaffold and the flames; while even in that still more ensnaring period of her worldly splendor, when the favor of princes lulled her to sleep on the brink of the precipice, there were not wanting thrilling notes waking the stillness of the sepulchre where she slept. There was increasing twilight, and there were faint songs of hope even during that prolonged night of the Middle Ages, when the false prophet held the luxuriant East in bondage, and Rome had thrown her manacles over the fairest portions of the earth. When the Protestant Reformation roused Europe from her slumbers, and she began in honesty and in earnestness to throw off her chains, the world resounded with her songs of deliverance. And then, as a wise Providence had ordered it, this New World loomed up from the ocean, and Puritans, and Huguenots, and Hollanders, and Scotsmen, all joined their notes of gladness! And now, where two centuries ago there was naught but savage men, and dark scenes, and darker thoughts, and no bright prospects, and no cheering retrospect, instead of the sad inquiry, "Where is God, my Maker?" the God of Zion is lifting up the standard every where, his churches are every where scattered, and millions adore him, praise him, enjoy him.

Nor will the years be many before this wide

earth on which we dwell will put on a brightened visage, and become radiant with smiles. The prophetic promise shall be doubly accomplished, "The Lord whom ye seek shall come suddenly to his Temple, even the Messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in." The fountain of life will be opened anew, and the waters of the sanctuary will flow deep and far, pouring their blessings upon him that is thirsty, and their floods upon the dry ground. The word of the oath has gone forth from his lips, "As I live, saith the Lord, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory!" The solid earth shall echo the glad tidings, and the islands shall bring their tribute of praise. Those who sit in darkness shall utter them, and the sighing of the prisoner shall be exchanged for songs. Conflicting nations shall utter them, and give glory to him who "maketh wars to cease to the ends of the earth." The silver clarion of the Gospel of peace shall usher in this earth's jubilee, and sea and land shall utter them, because "God their Maker giveth them songs in the night." Wrapped as they have been in darkness, "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

"One song employs all nations, and all cry
Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us!
The dwellers on the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other; and the mountain-tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy;

Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round."

III. There is, in the third place, the *night of spiritual declension*, which is also broken and cheered by songs.

The path of the Church in this wilderness-world is so circuitous and intricate, and so beset with difficulties, that not unfrequently "the soul of the people is much discouraged because of the way." Such is her inconstancy and unfaithfulness, that she passes through many a night of deep and guilty declension. *Ichabod* is written upon her temples; her glory is departed. God has committed to her his oracles and ordinances, but their quickening power is gone. Her ministry is fruitless; her sanctuaries are neglected; her "adversaries see her, and mock at her Sabbaths." There is little fellowship of the Spirit, and little enjoyment in this high and blessed communion, even in her solemn assemblies. The love of God to man does not find its response and counterpart in the love of man to God. There is the strong dominion of sense, but little of the power of a living faith. The world is near, the world is magnified. Its wealth, and pride, and pleasure, and honor find their sanction and their abettors in the house of God. The faith of the Church does not overcome the world; the world overcomes their faith. Those who name

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the name of Christ are not careful to depart from iniquity ; while not a few who "did run well" stumble in their course, and give up their hopes. The closet is well-nigh abandoned ; the family altar is broken down ; the children of the Church are scattered on the winds ; irreligion and ungodliness mark the progress of the rising generation, and "Zion mourns because few come to her solemn feasts."

This is a melancholy picture, and, in looking at it, "our eye affecteth our heart." It is a narrow passage in the wilderness, and a dark night, and, like the night in polar regions, it sometimes lingers long amid sloes and icebergs that scarcely catch the rays of the sun on their highest summits. Oh, it feels like winter, and its withering blast subsides slowly. It is the decline, the consumption of the Church, and borders on spiritual death.

We know not how long God may permit this melancholy declension to remain, and only know that a very low and languishing state of the Church is one of the tokens that he is about to revive his work. "It is *time* for thee to work," says the Psalmist, "for they have made void thy law." The darkest time is just before day. When the enemy begins to triumph, Zion begins to hope. The day of her deliverance draws nigh. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the

midst of darkness." Such depression calls for the interposition of omnipotent grace. The exigency is absolute. There is no other helper. And his interposition at such seasons greatly magnifies his own great name. Then it is that he has been wont to "make bare his arm," and show his power and grace. It ever has been the Church's hope that, "when the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifteth up a standard against him."

And then it is that "God, her Maker, giveth her songs in the night." In "the wilderness waters break out, and streams in the desert." The valley of Achor becomes a door of hope, and she "sings there as in the day of her youth." Every thing in her heritage now looks gay and green. He "watereth her hills from his chambers," and enriches her from the river of God which is full of water. "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, and the flowers appear on the earth. The time of the singing-bird is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land."

There are no songs like these songs of Zion, when, after long absence, her gracious and returning Lord thus bids her take her harp from the willows. Nothing is more fitted to awaken her gratitude, her humility, her hopes, her joys, her praise. The scene is exhilarating immeasurably beyond the most brilliant and joyous scenes of

earth. "It is the Lord's doings, and it is marvelous in our eyes." He "makes her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord." Zion's ways no longer mourn. The young and the old are entering upon their heavenly pilgrimage. Her solemn feasts are "feasts of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees well refined." Songs of salvation fill her sanctuaries, and cheer her children on their heavenward way. "It is the Lord's song in a strange land." "Joy and gladness are found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody."

IV. There are also, in the fourth place, songs *in the night of personal religious despondency*.

In the experience of all true Christians, self-despair is preliminary to hope in God. He saves men by himself alone. He will have all the glory of their salvation, or they never join the song of the redeemed.

We need not marvel, therefore, that there is so much religious despondency inwoven with the moral history of good men, and that it is sometimes a prominent feature in their character. Their early convictions of sin and danger, varying as they do in depth and power, all demonstrate that they are brought low before they are lifted up. The strongest intellects, when under the convincing power of truth and grace, are apt

to be the most deeply moved and distressed. The courage of the mind itself is cast down and bruised, under deep convictions of sin, as it is never crushed under the heaviest load of outward calamity. "The spirit of a man can sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Men can endure losses, and disappointment, and pain, but they can not long endure a bleeding conscience and a broken heart.

Yet this is the burden from which they seek relief, and such the darkness from which they are brought out into the light of life. It is from some such state of perplexity and sighing that God their Deliverer "takes them from the horrible pit and the miry clay, sets their feet upon a rock, and puts a new song into their mouth." When, from the darkness and the deep, and after the soul has been thrilled by terrible majesty and awful justice, sovereign mercy bids the desponding heart repose in the peace-speaking blood of Jesus, what marvel if their harps wake to anthems of redemption, and they begin their everlasting song?

And thus it often is throughout no small portion of their subsequent experience. Few of the children of God uniformly retain the vividness of new-born hopes and joys. Faith often loses its hold of the divine faithfulness, unbelief takes the place of confidence, and doubt of certainty, and then

"They dwell in darkness and unseen;
Their heart is desolate within."

They look around upon this desert world, and because heavenly consolations are not always supplied according to their anticipations, their complaint is, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock that the waters gushed out; can he give bread also?" Because sweet voices do not always cheer them, their soul is cast down within them, and in bitterness of spirit they exclaim, "Is his mercy clean gone forever? doth his promise fail for evermore?" The Tempter ensnares them, and God hides his face. "They go forward, but he is not there; backward, but they can not perceive him; on the left hand, where he doth work, but they can not behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that they can not see him." If they are silent, it is the silence of grief; if they speak, it is in the language of the patriarch, "Oh that I knew where I might find him; I would come even to his seat!"

They are dark nights to the soul when she thus laments after God. Nor would it accord with his ordinary dispensations if he who hears the young ravens when they cry does not restore "peace to his mourners," and for sighing give them songs. To mourn that they know so little of God, and enjoy him so little, is itself the evi-

dence of love to him, and the dawning expectation of beholding his face in righteousness. As the clouds that overshadow them thus gradually withdraw, his presence cheers them, and the restored light of his countenance fills them with "all joy and peace in believing." They are then happy in God, happy in the varied dispensations of his providence, happy in their religious privileges, happy in their duty, and happy in their trials; triumphant in their Savior. There are no clouds without, and no joyless scenes within. Their sun shines bright, and, not unfrequently after such seasons, it is never eclipsed until it goes down to rise on brighter spheres. "God, their Maker, giveth them songs in the night;" and they can say, "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips."

V. I remark, in the fifth place, a gracious God also giveth songs *in the night of affliction*.

"What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" The universal sin of man has given universality to the truth that "he is born to trouble." There is the depression of debility and disease. There is the disappointment of worldly hopes. There is mortified ambition and pride. There is wounded affection, confidence betrayed, and injury, and wrong. There are the "evil surmises of men of corrupt minds," the "reproach of the foolish," and the "strife of tongues." And

there are social bereavements which make men mourners, and tempt them to forget that there is any mixture of mercy in their cup. "Lover and friend are put far from them, and their acquaintance into darkness." Not unfrequently trials are so long-continued as to be more severely felt even than the sudden and crushing dispensations which, while they bruise and break the heart, give it time for healing. They are like the burning sun amid Arabian sands, or like the sirocco blast sweeping over the entire desert; not a leaf, not a rock to cover from the tempest. Solitude and sorrow only give emphasis to the moaning of the storm. The "God of Jeshurun, who rides in the heavens, and in his excellency on the sky," seems to them to "dwell in the thick darkness." His counsels, his providence, his word—all is dark. They look to his mercy-seat, but he "holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it."

Yet does he "temper the wind to the shorn lamb." And while he thus "stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind," he awakens serious thought, and leads the agitated heart to look out for something besides this perishing world to rest upon. "From the ends of the earth," says the Psalmist, "will I cry unto thee when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. Thou hast been

a shelter for me ; I will trust in the covert of thy wings." When the sons and daughters of affliction thus cast all their care upon him, his strength is made perfect in their weakness. They can say, "his will be done," and therefore they can say, "his name be praised!" He giveth them songs in the night. When Paul and Silas were in chains at Philippi, they sang praises to God at midnight, and the prisoners heard them. His persecuted people have many a time been traced to their hiding-places by the echo of their songs. God's promises cheer them in the day of their calamity ; and he still says that in their darkest hours "they shall have a *song* as in the night of their holy solemnities."

"They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." Afflictions often come upon us that we may know more of God. It is narrated of Xenocrates, the pupil of Plato, that when a sparrow pursued by a hawk flew to his bosom, he gave it protection till the enemy was out of sight, remarking that "he would never betray a suppliant." Oh, thou child of sorrow ! "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee ; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee." Oh, how little do *we know of God* if we judge that *he ever betrays his suppliants*. There is one who giveth liberally and upbraideth not ; he who was once the Man of Sorrows is not the one who up-

braids a breaking heart. Never, never does he turn away his ear from the cry of distress. Never is his bosom shut against those who fly to him in the day of their calamity. When the infuriate foe or the beetling storm pursues them, they may take refuge in his heart of love, and may repose there, and *sing aloud* of his faithfulness. We add,

VI. In the sixth and last place, God, our Maker, also giveth songs *in the night of the grave*.

Human life has its morning, its noon, its evening, when its light fades, and its cheerful scenery is gone. "Man cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down." The trunk decays, the stem is withered, the bud is blighted, and, even when it has reached its full-blown charms, "the wind passeth over it, and it is gone." "Man dieth and wasteth away; man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" Yes, *where is he*, now that the beating pulse beats no more, and the once warm cheek fades in death, and the swelling bosom is still and cold as marble? What a quiet empire is this over which death holds such undisturbed dominion! It is not the chamber of sickness, where the curtains are closely drawn, and every foot treads softly. It is not the hospital, where, ward after ward, human beings are the victims of infirmity and suffering. It is not the arctic regions, where cold and darkness settle down upon its

scarcely-living inhabitants, incarcerated in unbroken night. It is the *grave*, where man is no longer man. It is the bleak earth filled with the bodies of the dead. It is the land of silence, interrupted only by the knell of death and the mourner's sighing. What a bill of mortality is furnished by this record of the dead! It is the world's sepulchre, where the "worm feeds sweetly on them," and the "dust returns to the earth as it was." It is the quiet land, where the strife and contentions of this convulsed earth are forgotten; where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest;" where the bustle of business and the scramble for wealth are over, and where "the daughters of music are brought low;" where name and memory are lost, and where "the light is as darkness." Future days will return to gladden the earth; future suns will rise and set; future empires will come into being, and future emperors will reign; future statesmen, bards, churches, preachers, cities, generations, will appear and pass away, but not for them who dwell among the dead. No light cheers them; no song hitherto breaks the deep and dreary silence. Oh, the mystery of death! Man's earthly being is here under eclipse. The morning, the noon, the evening are past. "Man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more."

And are there no utterances of joy that shall yet cheer these spacious mansions of the dead?

“ Shall man, O God of light and life,
Forever moulder in the grave?
Canst thou forget thy glorious work,
Thy promise and thy power to save.”

If so, creation is a mystery; providence is a mystery; God is a mystery; the wondrous and progressive arrangements of his government are a mystery; man is a mystery; every thing within us and without us is inexplicably mysterious, if this world of intellectual and moral existences terminates in the clods of the valley. And these conclusions of unaided reason are fortified by the assurances which have “brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel.” Not more sure is nature’s law that night is followed by day, than that the long night of the grave is followed by a day when the sun shall never go down, nor the moon withdraw itself. The drama of time is closed only to discover the realities of eternity. The old heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the old earth shall be burned up; but new heavens and new earth shall rise over these decayed mansions of the dead, where what was “sown in corruption shall be raised in incorruption;” what was “sown in weakness shall be raised in power;” what was “sown in dishonor shall be raised in glory.” Those sweet faces we have sealed up there we shall see again. Ay, there shall be *songs* in the night of the grave.

Those sweet voices we have so often listened to we shall listen to again. When time shall have finished its course, and the mystery of God shall be perfected; when the purposes of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness in the creation and conservation of all things shall have been accomplished, and the victorious Son of God shall have established his dominion of holiness in the universe; then, when he shall have performed the greater in destroying the dominion *of sin*, he will also perform the less, and break up the universal empire *of death*. It will be the last and crowning act of the "excellency of his power" toward this lower creation. It will be redemption finished in "the adoption that is the redemption of the body." All that "are in their graves shall hear *his* voice, who is himself the resurrection and the life," and "the first fruits of them that slept." The promise is fulfilled, "Because I live, ye shall live also." The hearts of the living shall no longer be buried in the grave of the dead. Earth and sea shall no longer be the sepulchre of a departed world. Mountain and valley—the honored graveyard, where memory has so long lingered and affection so often wept, and the dishonored Potters' Field, as well as the unknown cemeteries where millions have mouldered to ashes, shall all deliver up their dead at the sound of the last trumpet; "for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall

be raised." The glory of that scene no poetry can describe, no pencil portray, when the countless myriads that have fallen asleep from the creation to the Last Judgment shall come forth. Death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire, and the long-delayed sentence shall be executed, "Oh death, I will be thy plague; oh grave, I will be thy destruction!"

The night of the grave shall then be vocal with songs. Fragrant exhalations will then come up from this resurgent world; new forms of beauty fulfilling and uttering the exultation, "Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory?" The prophetic precept shall at length be obeyed, "AWAKE AND SING, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead!"

Doubt not, oh ye who are destined to sleep out these long and dark ages of time beneath the ground that is cursed for man's sake, that God your Maker will give you songs in the night of the grave. Death shall not have dominion over you. There is no cheerlessness and desolation for those who have made the eternal God their refuge; no, not even in the night of the grave. Death may come slowly or suddenly; it may come on the leaden arrow which lingers on the bow of time, or on the rapid and dark wing of the pestilence; but be it when, or where, or how

it may, the Comforter will not be far off. And when you have passed the long night of the grave, where your "flesh shall rest in hope," and where, "all the days of your appointed time, you wait till your change come," this natural and mortal will become spiritual and immortal. It will be "the spirit land," and the land of immortality and of song.

My Christian brethren, you live in this world of "light and shadows," sighing and songs; and if it is Christ for you to *live*, it will be gain for you to *die*. Doubt it not, if ye are believers in Jesus. If you can not say you have so *lived* as not to be afraid to die, can you not say you have so *known Christ* as not to be afraid to die? Oh, I marvel not a little why we do not take stronger hold of the great and immutable truths of the everlasting Gospel! "If the spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." He goes not alone; "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." I love this tenement of clay that God has given me. It has been the companion of my toil and my relaxation—of my sorrows and my joys—of my sins and my duties; and, for more than three-score years and ten, the witness of man's infirmity and God's boundless goodness and mercy.

Yet, when I see the snows of winter settling upon my head, and my eye has become dim, and my natural force abated, I can in truth say, "I would not live always." It is no grief of heart to me that I must die. I would dwell where no sin invades, no night of death overshadows, and no sighing interrupts the song.

"O'er all those wide extended plains
Shines one eternal day;
There God the Savior ever reigns,
And scatters night away."

There, Christian, is thy home; and, through that same grace on which God has caused you to hope, I trust it will be mine.

Will it be *yours*, ye who forget God? Can it be yours if you live and die neglecting the great salvation? Ye who are in young life, and ye who are old, and on whom eternity is coming with a speed from which there is no escaping, tell me, will it be *yours*? Oh, when you cross this land of sense for that unknown land, God grant that it may be to the peaceful and happy shore, where all his redeemed shall come with songs and everlasting joy upon their head, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away!

SERMON V.

DEATH DESERVED AND LIFE GIVEN.

ROMANS, vi., 23.—“*The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

If the Gospel makes known “the only name given under heaven among men whereby they must be saved,” it is because, without this name, they are irrecoverably *lost*. The heaven-devised remedy is understood only as we understand the mortal disease, the antidote only as it is demanded by the bane. It *begins* its teachings by distinctly announcing the guilty character and lost condition of men, because all here begin to learn who become truly and experimentally acquainted with its great salvation.

The words of the text are affecting words. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The antithesis is striking and strong; and, when both parts of it are brought together, they are, like two detached pieces of the same machinery, exactly fitted to one another. We have,

I. In the first place, the unqualified assertion that THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH.

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Sin, what is it? It is not an abstract thing, floating, none can say where, and for which no one is accountable. It is not a crotchet, a phantom of the imagination, but a personal matter. It is not infirmity; it is not weakness; nor is it a mere moral vacuity of mind, which consists simply in the want of holiness. It is not calamity; it is not suffering. There is no wickedness in the freezing elements, even though they stiffen contending armies on the battle-field; nor is there wickedness in the empoisoned atmosphere, when plague and famine are commissioned to perform their work of death. Sin is a state of mind which deviates from the law which God has given for the regulation of human conduct, and it is actual deviation from that law. It is disobedience; it is transgression; it is impiety; it is wrong feeling and wrong doing; it is crime. It is that alone which God hates and forbids, because it is that alone which is in its own nature hateful, and can be forbidden. It is that alone thing in his wide universe for which he punishes, because there is nothing else which deserves his righteous displeasure.

Where the law of God is violated, there follows upon that violation the desert of punishment. There are claims of punitive justice on the transgressor. God is justice; the punishment of sin results from his nature. If he does not

punish it, he does not hate it; if he does not hate it, he is neither holy nor good; if he is neither holy nor good, he is not God. "To him *belongeth* vengeance and recompense; justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Without them his throne totters and falls; these form the basis on which it rests. Without them there is no government, no law, no Lawgiver, no Deity.

The laws of the physical creation are not more firmly established than this great and fundamental law of the moral creation. It were just as rational to believe that heavy bodies do not fall, that light does not shine, that cold does not contract, and heat does not expand, as that sin does not deserve punishment. Punishment answers to the demands of sin, just as the angry ocean answers to the dark tempest—just as the withered and parched plains answer to the brazen and burning heavens—or just as buried cities answer to the lava of the wasting volcano. The law is perfect, constant, and never suspended.

Conscience shows the fitness of this correspondence. With a fair opportunity of judging, conscience is just as fitted to pronounce on the guilt of sin, as the eye is fitted to see the light, or the ear to be pleased with agreeable sounds, or the lungs to breathe the air. And *reason* proclaims this truth with almost equal emphasis. Without this great law, the universe would be a chaos;

there would be a place for nothing, and nothing would be in its place. Punishment, without sin, would be an unaccountable event; it would be something dis severed from the beautiful system of government which God has established — an isolated and anomalous existence which would throw the universe into disorder. And sin, without punishment, would be the same; it would have no counterpart; there would be nothing to respond to it; it would stand alone, a monstrous anomaly. All ideas of wisdom, of expediency, of moral fitness and propriety, would be exploded. Justice and injustice would be names without meaning; there would no longer be any difference between what is right and what is wrong. Sin, therefore, has its recompense; the wages follow in the train of the work.

What, then, is the true and proper wages of sin? The text replies to this inquiry when it records the fearful truth, "*The wages of sin is death.*" This is the punishment it deserves; this is the true and proper compensation which it earns. It is nothing less and nothing more; the weight and degree of it are measured by the weight and degree of the offense.

But what is DEATH? It is a fearful word, but it did not originate with the vocabularies of earth. We find it used, for the first time, by God himself, and to denote the *revealed penalty of his*

violated law. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely DIE!" When this threatening was uttered, our first parents knew very little of its import. They did not know what it was to *die*; they had never before heard of *death*. They knew it was the withdrawing of the divine favor, and the endurance of his displeasure. This was death enough. They knew it was the voice of *threatening*, and that it included the evil that would be visited upon them by God himself if they did not maintain their unblemished integrity; but they did not know what it was. Do we know what it is? We have heard the fame thereof with our ears; but the most we know of it is that it sounds the note of alarm. It does not present clear and full impressions of the dreadful penalty; nor is it possible that, to finite minds, the full and completed penalty should ever be otherwise than thus indefinitely set forth. The most we can say of it is that it is the melancholy emblem of suffering; it is the premonition, the prolonged echo of woe. It is the fountain of sorrows, and every bitter ingredient in the cup of misery flows from it as its source.

Nor let it be deemed paradoxical when we say that it is intelligible and definite enough were it only for its indefiniteness. The Scriptures do not abound in philosophic distinctions; they lead us to look upon the effects and consequences of sin

as constituting a part of its penalty. Every form and degree of human suffering is death; death begun, death in progress, and the earnest of death. Whatever suffering exists in this or in the future world, which would not have existed had man never fallen, visits our race in the form of *penalty*. That curse upon the ground and that painful toil are death. That corroding solicitude, those losses, and that poverty are death. Those heart-rending bereavements, that pensive solitude, and those bitter tears are death. Those days of weariness, and those nights of grief; those disappointed hopes and cruel fears; that self-suspicion, that shame, that gloom and terror of conscience, are death. That couch of pain, that debility and restlessness, that worn and pallid face, that fading eye, that palsied arm, that cold forehead, that fluttering heart, that deep-drawn sigh—what are these but *death*? That last farewell to earth, and to the sun that enlightens and cheers it, and to all its loved inhabitants and joys; that “king of terrors,” reigning in dread supremacy over the alarmed and agitated mind; that crushing of this earthly tabernacle—*that* is death. That pale and lifeless form, its beauty fled, its freshness gone, all hurried from the sight of the living, and covered up in the dark sepulchre—*that* is death. Ask we *what* it is? It is God’s messenger sent to execute the penalty of his law. Ask we *why*

it comes in such terrific forms to man, when to other and inferior orders of existence it is divested of these terrors? It is because "the sting of death is *sin*." Ask we *where* it is? It is on the land and on the ocean; it is in the crowded city and the quiet cottage; it is here; it is above, around us, beneath us; it is far off and near; it is every where where there is sin. Death writes his name on the stormy tempest; breathes amid the devouring conflagration; goes hand in hand with grim famine; and unfurls his banner amid clashing helmets, and garments rolled in blood. It even impregnates the cloud; it comes in the dew; it steals upon us in the zephyr; it flows in every stream; it grows on every blade of corn; its knock is heard in every beating pulse.

Yet are all these but the *pagantry* of death—the foreshadowing of the evils which follow in his train when he comes to exact the full recompense of sin and execute its curse. There is a death that never dies; a grave so deep as to be the dark abode of a deathless, yet ever agonizing, ever dying immortality. That fearful plunge into the world of everlasting retribution, that soul separated by sin from God, God its author, God its life and blessedness, where "he that made it will not have mercy on it, and he that formed it will show it no favor"—*this is death*. That last sentence, "Depart, ye cursed!" this is the death

the sinner fears, but can not escape, and can not endure; it consummates his woe. He is henceforth an exile from heaven, and shut up in hell. His existence is a curse, and ten thousand times could he wish that he had never been born. That gloom, that hopelessness, that sense of abandonment and desolation, that lost and bewildered mind, now petrified with fear, now infuriate with malignity, and now fluttering in wild derangement and infuriate despair—oh, this is the death that will never die! And that wrath of God, that fearful wrath, so emphatically yet figuratively set forth by the undying worm and that flame that never shall be quenched—this is death eternal and without reprieve. That abode of the lost, that dismal, everlasting world of sin, sorrow, and despair—this is death, the “second death,” death unmeasured and without end!

Yes, this is it; this is “the wages of sin.” Such are its earnings—its exact and justly-balanced earnings; and because, through the divine long-suffering, not punctually rendered in the present world, fully rendered at last.

But we turn from this dismal scene, this spectacle of horror. While the Scriptures instruct us that “the wages of sin is death,” they also instruct us, with the same explicitness,

II. In the second place, that **THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.**

To men fallen by their iniquity this is a wondrous announcement; it is "glad tidings of great joy." What a world would this have been but for this great and comprehensive truth, ruined as it is by sin, and staggering under the curse of a righteous law! "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ." What living germs of hope in every word of this wondrous declaration! We have in it the theory of the Gospel, and the Gospel illustrated; the Gospel dignified by its association with truth, sacred by its association with holiness, and precious by its associations with Jesus Christ and the heaven where he dwells. Three facts are here set before us.

1. The first is, *the existence of such a state of positive safety and glory as that described by the words eternal life.* Disciplined as it may be, there is nothing in the human mind by which it ever has arrived, or ever would arrive, at a satisfactory and tranquil belief of this great truth. If it be written on the starry heavens, or on the variegated earth, or on the more delicate structure of the immaterial and thinking existence within us, or if it is evolved in the dispensations of a mysterious providence, it is in characters so obscure and dubious that human reason, blinded as it is, can not so read it as to be satisfied with its own conclusions. For the knowledge of this truth and this blessedness we are indebted to a

supernatural revelation. Strong persuasions of immortality we might have without such a revelation; vague conjectures, too, we might indulge concerning its nature; but where it is, what it is, we never could have known. "Life and immortality are brought *to light*—they are illumined by the Gospel."

Life, what is it? What is that mysterious principle in organized existences which we call life? It is something more than that state in which their natural functions and motions are performed. It is something more than that state of being in which the soul and body are united. We have seen what death is, and it is the opposite of death.

Whether in the vegetable, animal, or intellectual creation, it is the opposite of *death*. We can not better define it than by saying it is the *highest form of existence of which the subject is capable*. In the material world it is activity, beauty, and usefulness; in the moral it is the prolonged existence of purity, usefulness, and joy. It is not the wilted, colorless, mouldering trunk that stands the monument of the scorching sun and the wintry blast; it is the blushing, fragrant blossom of holy thought and holy emotion, strong and healthy, unsevered from its parent stock, ever progressing to its maturity, and bearing immortal fruits.

It is a sublime epithet which is given to one Being in the universe when he is represented as "the *living* God"—ay, the living God. It is not the mere fact that he exists that renders him thus glorious. If there were wickedness in his nature, and the seeds of misery, his existence would be joyless. He is the living God because he is a pure and stainless, a happy and joyous existence. That in which he differs most from creatures is the nature and properties of that wondrous and inherent principle of holy and happy existence, utterly incomprehensible by us, which he possesses underived, which is without beginning and without end, and which renders him "God blessed forever." This is true also of the creatures he has made. Angels and men *live* just in the measure in which their inferior and borrowed existence approximates to the pure, and blessed, and undying life of the immortal Deity. This world was a *living* world until sin separated man from God, and introduced into this living and ornate creation the prolific causes of decay and death. It becomes a living world again just in the measure in which the restoring process is advanced by which there come forth new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. That day is coming in which the great Author of all things, and the source of all spiritual life, will announce, "Behold, I create Jerusalem a re-

joicing, and her people a joy." It is a joyous existence, a spiritual vitality, far beyond and above the mere dying life of animated nature, or the fitful and ungoverned life of minds that are deranged and maddened by wickedness. Spiritual life begins in the soul not until its native degeneracy is staid, and these causes of decay and death are first arrested by almighty grace. Such are the teachings of the Bible. "You hath he *quickened* who were *dead* in trespasses and sins. This my son was *dead*, and is *alive* again." When the immortal being that was dying and dead in sin is thus quickened and made alive, he becomes a new creature, a child of God, a follower of the Lamb. He is a renewed sinner before he is a pardoned sinner. Not until God gives him a new heart and a new spirit is he a believer in Jesus Christ, and united by a heaven-imparted faith to that parent Stock, that living Vine which gives activity and strength to the weakest as well as the strongest branches. As it is written, "As many as *received him*, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, which *were born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Then he enters upon that immortal career of wisdom, holiness, and joy, which constitute the life of God in the soul. It is, indeed, an infant's life. He is but a babe in Christ. But he *lives*. He utters the infant's

cry, "Abba, Father!" The divine image is impressed upon him; he is created anew, and has another and heavenly birth. This is the dawn and rise of his spirituality; here are the rudiments and first principles of that holy and pardoned, that justified and titled, that happy and honored existence, which acquires its maturity in perfected holiness and fullness of joy.

The childlike breathings of such a state of being tend upward, and stretch toward eternity. It is *eternal* life. It has its beginning, its progress, its final attainment and glory. That sense of wickedness, and that humble prostration at the foot of the cross—that voluntary disclaimer of all reliance on a personal righteousness, and that hearty reliance on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, introduce the subject to a state of being as different from his former state, as the solitude, and horror, and death of sin are different from the fellowship, and tranquillity, and joy of a life of holiness. That love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost partakes of the life of its divine Author. That faith, that submission, and those hungerings and thirstings after righteousness are life. That sweet sense of pardon, and that inward consciousness of safety and peace, are the seal of heaven that the life so righteously forfeited is restored and confirmed. That light of God's countenance which, like the day-

star, rises upon the soul, intercepted though it be by passing clouds, is the precursor of a bright and unclouded day. That training of the celestial spirit, by which he perseveres in holiness, and struggles successfully with the sin that dwelleth in him, and acquires a more manly courage and vigor, are at once the elements and incentives to a living and growing spirituality. He is passed "from *death* unto *life*;" he lives in a new world; "old things are passed away, and all things are become new." His day is clear and serene; full of labor, full of conflict, yet full of beauty and full of hope. Nor does the light of it go down; even the grave does not quench it; it is the dawn of eternity, and the vivid emblem of the life that is unperishing. Oh, it is *life, eternal life!* It is the light of life reflecting its radiance on the last path he travels below; it is the triumph of life over the sting of death and the darkness of the grave; it is the gate of life open to receive him as he bids adieu to the regions of sorrow and sin; it is the vision of life as he stands on the luminous verge of eternity, and thence wings his way to that world where they shall not die any more, because they are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Mortality is swallowed up of life. Probation is closed, and retribution is begun. "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into

the joy of thy Lord." This is his welcome to his appointed destination. His throne is theirs; his joy is their joy. This is "life eternal." It is heaven begun; it is heaven perpetuated. It is the life of the soul, the life of eternity. It is the perfection of man's existence and his Maker's love.

2. The second fact adverted to in this part of the text is that *it is eternal life through Jesus Christ*. All who are saved are saved in the same way, and through the knowledge of that way. If it is the law of nature and the law of God that "the wages of sin is death," it may not be supposed that eternal life is made over to the guilty by rudely and violently sundering their obligations to law or their bondage to the curse. It is a dictate of reason and conscience, as well as the decision of the supreme Lawgiver, that the claims of the divine rectitude and justice can not be thus arbitrarily set aside. Eternal life has been procured at great expense and sacrifices, and it is dispensed only in the way prescribed by Unerring Rectitude and Infinite Love.

What is that way? To answer this question is the great object of a supernatural revelation. The lights of reason and nature go far toward solving every other problem, this they can not solve; and the more they dwell upon it, the greater is their embarrassment, and the more certainly

do the hopes they originate vanish in never-ending night. The difficulty lies in not being able to perceive the harmony of the divine attributes in extending pardon to the guilty, in reconciling the claims of an inflexible and equal justice with the solicitude, the desires, the designs of infinite and everlasting mercy. To reconcile these claims is the great work of God's unsearchable wisdom. He who knows and foreknows all things, perceived that *there was a way* of dispensing his justice so that none of its ends should be lost sight of, while, at the same time, the wrathful sentence is averted from the persons of all believing and repentant transgressors. What that method of mercy is was in the first instance revealed obscurely, afterward more clearly, and ultimately with such explicitness that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." It is "eternal life *through Jesus Christ*." This is God's way of saving sinners. It is his own appointed way, through the propitiation of his Son. The sufferings of his Son constitute this propitiation; this is their great peculiarity that they are an *accepted equivalent* for the executed penalty of the law, and, as such, have received the approval and signature of the supreme Lawgiver. By his own appointment they constitute the legal substitute for the punishment of those, in all ages of the world, who receive it—"the *just* for the *unjust*,

that he might bring them unto God." "All we like sheep had gone astray; but the Lord laid on *him* the iniquity of us all." His life and death of unsinning obedience constitute a *righteousness*, in testimony and honor of which the Great Law-giver invests all who believe in him with the claims and honors of unsinning subjects, so that nothing shall be laid to their charge. What he did and suffered rendered *him* deserving his great reward. *He* earned it just as truly as sin earns the wages of death. *He merits* it; and now, no matter who or where he is, or how great a sinner, who truly and from the heart falls in with this redemption, the death of Christ is accounted as *his* death, and the righteousness of Christ is reckoned as his righteousness, and imputed to him for all the purposes of a personal justification.

There are mysteries in this redemption, but they are mysteries of God's everlasting wisdom and love. The substitution of the innocent for the guilty—the wondrous person of the mighty Sufferer, and the intensity of his sufferings, are not for creatures of yesterday to comprehend. It was fitting that he should be *God*, because he is the vindicator and guardian of the rights of the Godhead, and because the temporary sufferings of no mere creature could be an equivalent for that death which is the wages of sin. It was fitting that he should be *man*, that he might be one

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like those he came to redeem, that the nature which sinned might suffer—that the wondrous sacrifice might be made before the eyes of men, and that he might stand in close and fraternal relations to those whom he came to save. But, while there are “the deep things of God” in this redemption, the sum and substance of it is intelligible to babes. “God manifest in the flesh,” virtually suffering the death which we deserve, that we may be partakers of the life which he deserves, this every man can understand, and this is God’s way of life. It is “eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” He has procured it; he reveals it; he communicates it. His cross is the emblem of its hopes; his word the depository of its truths; his Spirit the author of its graces; his promises the guaranty that it will be perfected; his life the pledge that, “because he lives, his people shall live also.” The pardon and holiness which constitute it are through him; the faith that receives it is on him; the hopes that cheer it are built on that sure foundation; the joy that consummates it is his joy. In all its parts and forms, its means and instruments, its commencement, progress, and completion, its final triumphs and everlasting song, its author and finisher is none but Christ.

3. The third fact attested in this part of our text is, that eternal life, thus conveyed, *is the gift*

of God. He is the greatest of givers. He gives life, and breath, and all things. He gives the rain from heaven and the gentle dew. He gives the cheerful day and the tranquil night. The bounties of the sea and land, and the treasures of every clime, are his gift. His gifts are adapted to every capacity of enjoyment—every sense, every thought, every desire and hope. He gives willingly, cheerfully, because he loves to give. It is not with upbraiding that he gives, any more than with a grudging parsimony. Giving is his nature, his honor, his wealth, his joy. We know very little of God. We, that ought to know so much, know very little of the unsearchable riches of his bounty. His name is love; his thoughts are thoughts of love; his acts are acts of love. He exists to express and gratify his love. This is the great end he has in view, in all his works, and in all the arrangements of his unfathomable wisdom. He gives as no other gives, as no other can give, and as no other ever thought of giving.

It were an unaccountable fact, since he is the giver of all this earthly good, if spiritual and eternal good were not from him. Such are the declarations of his word. “This is the testimony of God, that he hath *given* us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Not as the offense, so also is the *free gift*; for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the *free gift* is of many of-

fenses unto justification." It is purely a *gift* from the Father of lights. It was his to devise, and it is his to bestow, who is the greatest Giver in the universe. The holiest of men have no claims upon such bounty; at best they are but "unprofitable servants." They are "less than the least of all God's mercies." So far are they from having rendered him services that invest them with a title to eternal life, they have forfeited all good, and have in their own persons no rightful inheritance but that death which is the wages of sin. What they receive is indeed a stipulated *recompense to Christ*; but it is the *gift of grace to them*. They themselves are ill-deserving; nor is there any thing in the work of Christ that takes away their ill desert. They ever will be ill-deserving, pensioners upon grace, eternally indebted to free, infinite, immeasurable grace.

This is an important truth both in the theology and piety of the Scriptures—the only theology they reveal, and the only piety they teach and recommend. Human religions teach that salvation is of men; the Scriptures teach that it is of God. Human religions teach that it is the reward of human effort; the Scriptures teach that it is the gift of God. Human religions teach that it is of works of righteousness; the Scriptures teach that "by grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of

God." It calls not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. It is not worthiness that it seeks for; its first and great demand is upon a faith, the grand sentiment of which is that the sinner is unworthy and his salvation all of grace. From first to last it is all gift and grace. The Mediator through whom it flows is God's "unspeakable gift." The agency by which it is conveyed to the soul is "the gift of the Holy Ghost." Of the heart that receives it God says, "A new heart will I *give* you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Of the repentance that mourns for the past, and that endeavors after new obedience for the future, he says, "He is exalted as Prince and Savior to *give* repentance." Of the faith that confides in it, he affirms that it is "of the operation of God." To every one who has this confidence he says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will *give* thee a crown of life." "The Lord God is a sun and shield; he will *give* grace and glory." The gift of his Son is itself the earnest of every other gift. "He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him *freely give* us all things?"

Salvation through Christ is, therefore, every way an unembarrassed and free salvation; it is the mere gift of God, and the expression of his rich and unsearchable grace. No other religion is fitted to the character and wants of man, or

meets his necessities when struggling in vain to work out a righteousness of his own by the deeds of the law, or when burdened and oppressed by a sense of his sins, or when his fears are startled in view of the coming wrath. No other gives him a confiding and cheerful hope—urges him to go on his way and rejoice as he goes—enables him to look the king of terrors in the face without dismay, and conducts him to Mount Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon his head. It is God's salvation and God's gift. He gives it entire. And what a gift! what a donation of his infinite love! what immeasurable munificence to guilty, impoverished men!

We have thus illustrated the two affecting declarations, that the wages of sin is death, and that the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. We deduce from this illustration two remarks:

1. In the first place, *how full of encouragement are the thoughts we have suggested to the anxious inquirer after the salvation of God.* If any who hear me are beginning to feel the weight of the truth that "the wages of sin is death," allow me to say to them that they can not feel it too deeply. Your sins and mine, beloved hearers, draw after them this everlasting desert of God's displeasure. Yes, it is even so. God grant that you may feel the weight of this truth more and

more! There is no false reasoning here, and no false alarm of conscience. It is no illusion that the wages of sin is *death*.

If the thought is painful to you, I can only say it is no marvel that it should be painful. The sooner and the more deeply you feel the weight of it the better; the sooner and the more earnestly will you cry, "Lord, save, or I perish!" It is related of the celebrated Charles Wesley, that, in great agony and darkness of mind, he once said to the Countess of Huntingdon, "Lady Huntingdon, I am *lost*; there is no hope for such a sinner as I am; I see that I must *perish*!" The countess replied, "I am glad of it, Mr. Wesley; I am heartily glad of it." "But is it not strange," rejoined this despairing sinner, "that you should be glad that I am *lost*?" It was a cheering and precious truth, and one which none of the princes of this world knew, which she uttered in her final reply: "No, Mr. Wesley; for they were the *lost* the Son of Man came to seek and to save." And it is as delightful and cheering a truth to you, my hearers, as it was to the mind of this hitherto benighted and desponding man. The sooner you are driven to despair from self and creatures, the sooner will you learn the value of the declaration that "the *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Oh that I had so magnified, or could so magnify this gift of God, as to

commend it to your acceptance! The wages of sin are fearful beyond thought; but they are not more fearful than this "gift of God" is free and glorious, nor so abundant as the grace that "much more abounds."

Yet may it not be forgotten that it is not an *offered* salvation merely that will pacify an angry conscience; it is a *received* salvation. It is not yours until you accept it as God's gift. It is palpably absurd to suppose that you can be interested in a salvation which you reject. Receive it, and it is yours. Nothing stands between the chief of sinners and the life eternal when this gift of God is once bestowed and received.

2. In the last place, *well may the recipients of this gift ascribe all the glory of their salvation to God alone.* We are but receivers, my Christian brethren, at the best. God's way of saving sinners is to empty them of themselves. "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" With unfeigned and deep humility may you say, "By the grace of God I am what I am!" There are strong self-righteous tendencies in the human heart. Its pride may not be gratified to be thus a pensioner; yet are we, after all, but beggars, living every day upon the bounty of ineffable grace. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory!" This, Christian, is thy tribute of praise. You can not exalt too highly the

ever-blessed and adorable One. 'A sweet employment will it be to spend eternity in his praise who loved thee, and gave himself for thee, and gave thee life eternal. The humblest are the most familiar with this service. When he has made you less than the least in your own eyes, you will most rejoice that he should have all the honor of your salvation.

SERMON VI.

HUMAN DEPENDENCE.

JEREMIAH, x., 23.—“*O Lord, thou knowest that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*”

DID we know nothing more of human life than is to be collected from the ordinary sentiments and language of mankind, we might conclude that it is a course wholly within our own power, and decided merely by our own choice. It is not so. Every man is the creature of destiny as of will. There is a God above him who “ruleth in the armies of heaven, and amid all the inhabitants of the earth.” There is an unerring guidance in all that concerns him; “Man’s heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.”

We more readily admit this truth in its application to states and empires than to individuals, because it is more impressively illustrated upon the larger than the smaller scale, and because it has less semblance of collision with individual responsibility. That nations rise and fall at his bidding—that thrones are established and demolished by his providence—that he legislates for the

universe and for eternity—are grand thoughts, and give grandeur to his character and claims.

It is not this historical and ethnological view of his government which we propose now to furnish, full of interest as it is, and abundant as the facts are for such an illustration. The great religious truth THAT THE GOD OF HEAVEN PRESIDES OVER THE DESTINIES OF MEN AS INDIVIDUALS, together with some of the moral lessons which it inculcates, is the object of the present discourse. If we mistake not, it may be fully illustrated by the induction of the following distinct particulars :

I. In the first place, *God has ordered the circumstances of every man's introduction into the world.*

The period of the world in which men begin their earthly existence—the lineage from which they descended—the place where they first drew the vital air and beheld the light, were all selected by Infinite Wisdom and decided by an unerring providence. It was the God of heaven alone who decided whether we ourselves should commence our existence in the ages of darkness and terror, or the ages of light and mercy—whether we should be brought into the world amid the ignorance and superstition of savage tribes, or amid the knowledge and piety of Christian lands—whether we should be born under the iron

sway of despotism, or under milder skies, and where liberty and law take the place of arbitrary power—whether we should enter on our career amid scenes of revolution and blood, or scenes cheered by the blessings of peace—whether we should be descended from debased or honorable parentage, poor or rich, virtuous and happy, or vicious and miserable. The various circumstances that thus exert their early influence on the character of men are *never* decided by themselves, but by a power above them—by the great overruling, all-pervading Mind.

Yet few circumstances exert a more powerful and decisive influence on all their future course than those which thus affect the first stages of their immortal career. What men are is often decided from the cradle. When Moses lay a weeping infant in the ark of reeds on the banks of the Nile, the God of heaven had views respecting him which were above the thoughts of creatures. The fact that he was thus rescued from the exterminating edict of the cruel Pharaoh, and was born a Hebrew, was decisive of his character and destiny. Abraham might have been born on the cliffs of Greenland, Paul in Hindostan. Wicliffe, Luther, Calvin, and Knox might have been nurtured in the savage wilderness. Bacon might have been cradled on the sands of Africa, and Locke and Edwards on the pagan

islands of the sea. It is a remark of Coleridge, in one of his essays in "The Friend," that "Mohammed, born twelve centuries later, and in the heart of Europe, would not have been a false prophet; nor would a false prophet of the present generation have been a Mohammed in the sixth century." And who does not see that their subsequent history and character would have been affected by the circumstances of their birth? The early training of men is rarely, if ever, in their own hands. They never become what they are, whether it be for good or for evil, without the agency of others, nor without the agency of events and occurrences which they themselves never thought of. The potter has not more power over the clay of the same lump, to shape and form it as he pleases, than the great Creator exercises over the circumstances of our introduction into the present world.

II. With the same confidence may it be remarked, in the next place, that *God has given to men their physical constitution and intellectual capacity.*

These exert no small influence on their character and condition. Of the millions of mankind, there are probably no two individuals exactly alike in these endowments. One is endowed with a vigorous, and another with an enfeebled and sickly constitution. One struggles

with infirmity, and is perpetually discouraged because his efforts at advancement are inconstant and few, and his plans doomed to disappointment; another is patient of toil and fatigue, and formed for endurance and achievement. Some are distinguished for the original strength of their minds, for the brightness and ardor of their genius, and for a strong and determined will; others possess but a moderate share of intellect, are heavy and tame, or wild and erratic; while others come into the world, and go through it in intellectual childhood. A vigorous constitution, united with strong intellectual powers, are, for the most part, essential ingredients in human greatness; they fit men for spheres of action which otherwise they would not occupy, and advance them to places of power and influence. The want of these unnerves the courage, depresses the hopes, and defeats the expectations of multitudes, whose ambition would render them infamous, or whose benevolence would secure for them lasting praise. Yet these are not so much the natural growth of cultivation and improvement as the peculiar gift of God. It is he who giveth strength to the strong, wisdom to the prudent, and lays the feeble upon their bed of languishing. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." The very hairs of your head are all "numbered." "Of him,

and through him, and to him are all things." By how much the conduct and course any man pursues is governed by these things, by so much is he dependent on the Most High. They are not within his own power, nor determined by his own inclinations, but are absolutely and always in the hands of God. The intellect to plan, the judgment to discriminate and conclude, and the enterprise and enthusiasm to execute, are from him. "He lifteth up and he casteth down. He ruleth over all the kingdoms of men, and giveth to whomsoever he will."

III. This thought receives confirmation, in the third place, from the fact *that God himself directs all the occupations of men.*

No man occupies important spheres without his own exertions, nor unless those exertions are directed to some definite end. What men are, and what they will be, therefore, depends in no small degree upon their habitual employment. The prosperity they enjoy, the temptations to which they are exposed, the opposition and difficulties they encounter, the efforts that are forced upon them, and the good or evil they accomplish, are connected by inseparable links with their allotted career, and the course prescribed to them. And this course varies, like the streams which fertilize the countries through which they pass, or stagnates in its lakes and marshes. Some

glide through the world in obscurity and insignificance; some dash through it; some flow on in tranquillity and majesty, marking their course by the verdure which skirts their path. There is not only "an appointed time," but an appointed place "to man on the earth." The course of some is strongly marked with peculiarities, and their character is as extraordinary as their employment is peculiar. Some are devoted to the more humble and menial offices; others mingle with the ordinary elements and responsibilities of human life; others labor silently and alone; while others, from the exalted position they occupy, fill a wide space in the world. From the shop of the mechanic to the bureau of the minister of state, every department of human labor is perpetually giving forth and receiving an influence peculiarly its own. The pulpit and the bar, the quiet halls of the university and the tumultuous field of battle, the office of the banker and the merchant's warehouse, the cultivated field and the stormy sea, each forms its own peculiar character. Nor is there one in these departments of labor who, transferred to another and different department, would not, in important particulars, have been a different man.

And who does not see that, in all these occupations, "the way of man is not in himself," and that there is a prescribed course, a sphere of ac-

tion, appointed to every individual of the human family by the all-governing and superintending providence of God? Even "the king's heart is in the hands of the Lord; as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will." "Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" The works and ways of Providence, even in the ordinary concerns of human life, are wonderful, but they are often clearly discerned. It is no difficult matter to perceive that the occupations in which men are employed often depend upon their capacity, or on the place of their residence, or on their parentage and connections, or on their education, or on their moral and religious qualifications. Yet all these are, as we have seen, in the hands of God; he presides over and determines them all. He controls the circumstances and influences which act upon our own minds; he shapes the counsels of our advisers, and he furnishes or withholds the means and opportunities of our advancement. Not unfrequently some incidental and even trivial occurrence, to which men themselves had attached no importance, and which they had never thought of, decides the course which they pursue to the end of their days. It may be some unlooked-for disappointment, some unexpected interview, some quarrel or some attachment, some bright sun or lower-

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ing cloud, some calamity, some death, some conflagration, some legislative enactment or judicial decision, some news from foreign lands, some newly-discovered or acquired territory, some hour of vacillation, some book, some imprudent act of their own, some new leaf turned over in the volume of providence, that effects an entire change in all their purposes and pursuits. Not a few follow the occupation which, in early life, they never thought of following. Even after they have chosen their employment, causes of which they were ignorant, and long ago settled in the counsels of the "God only wise," have made an entire change in their arrangements. The power of man is frail as the tender grass; his wisdom is folly when undirected by God. A purpose was formed in the retirement and silence of eternity which decides every man's course of life; and a providence there is, under the direction of an unseen, unerring, and omnipotent hand, which governs that course. The combination of circumstances which fixes the bounds of his habitation and determines his allotment is to be traced to other arrangements besides his own. His own purpose and will are not severed from his destiny, nay, they are essential to it; but even these are dependent on a higher power. God is over all and above all. He governs and controls all human arrangements, and exercises a sovereign

dominion over all those secret springs of action by which our course is directed. He is our Master; we are his servants.

IV. We remark, in the fourth place, *God also allots to men their different measures of success in the several enterprises in which they are employed.*

He buries in oblivion and he elevates to eminence. If they are rich, he "giveth them power to get wealth, and causes them to ride upon the high places of the earth." If they are poor, "he that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker;" the "Lord maketh poor and maketh rich." Men may survey their treasures and their honors, and administer the flattering unction to their pride, "Mine own hand hath gotten all these things;" but they are slow of heart to inquire, Whence is the power, and enterprise, and toil that procures them? It is true that the most successful of our race are "self-made men;" but there are extraneous causes of their industry and perseverance attributable to God alone, so that no man is his own arbiter. He may be more diligent than others, more economical, and more unwearied in his efforts; he may have a stronger purpose and will; but "who made him to differ" in these respects from others, and "what has he that he has not received?" If he will but look back upon his past history, and survey the world

around him, he will perceive that the multitude of second causes, both moral and physical, which favor or countervail his designs, over which he has no control, and on which his successes have been and are so dependent, may well constrain him to confess that no man is sent into this world to be his own arbiter.

This is a matter of every day's observation. Experience teaches us the utter uncertainty of all human calculations. The enterprises in which we are engaged are, without our consent, so often involved in the concerns of others, and so dependent on their decline or advancement, that few who are extensively engaged in the business of the world know what shall be on the morrow. The integrity or the perfidy of those with whom we are nearly, or even remotely connected—their good or evil fortune—the political and religious condition of the land in which we live, as well as of other lands—and, not unfrequently, the opinion or the will of a single individual, sets in motion a train of events which decides the fate, not of individuals only, but of whole communities. The best-concerted arrangements may thus be frustrated, the most sanguine hopes dashed, and the most favorite desires fostered only to be subject to mortification.

Reasonable and just expectations are also often defeated by those laws by which God governs the

natural world. The rain, the sunshine, the dew, the frost, the wind, the tempest, the inundation, the lightning, the drought, the pestilence, the mildew, the worm, the famine—all these are God's messengers, commissioned on errands of mercy or judgment. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all." A particular providence governs all their successes. Upon some its smile seems to alight at every step; while on others, frowns, dark and heavy, settle with unremitting discouragement. They promise themselves success where God arranges their defeat. They anticipate wealth where he appoints them to privations and poverty. They look for a plain path where he makes it perplexing and intricate. They hope for allies and friends, and find rivals and enemies. And, on the other hand, when, in the despondency of their own minds, they look for darkness, he leads them into light; and for a straitened and narrow path, they are brought out into a large and wealthy place. They find friends instead of foes; and, amid scenes where they expected nothing but alarm and terror, they find only the tokens of tranquillity and joy. Divine providence, while it treats every man better than he deserves, sets its mark upon every man. The great Supreme

exercises the prerogative of giving and withholding as his own wisdom dictates. We can claim from him nothing. Honor, wealth, friends, usefulness, comfort, are not our indefeasible rights. They are gifts, immunities, flowing from the exuberance of his bounty, and dispensed according to his will.

V. God has also, in the fifth place, *fixed the time and circumstances of every man's death.*

The influence and condition of men in the present world depend on the time they occupy in it, and the length of the way they are traveling. Time is the great developer of character, the great accumulator of wealth and usefulness, the great maturer of man's plans and efforts. But this is not a matter which is at their disposal. How long they shall live—when, where, and how they shall die, are fixed by wise and unchanging counsels in which they themselves have no part. Some are full of days; the almond-tree flourishes on their head, and they come to their grave like a shock of corn in its season, fully ripe. Others open their eyes upon the light, or travel on a few short years, and then are shrouded in the darkness of the tomb. No man can prolong his life an hour beyond the period fixed by God, any more than he can add a cubit to his stature. The sovereign Arbiter decides the course of the infant, who passes from the slumbers of its mother's

bosom to the deeper slumbers of the grave ; terminates the career of the youth, whose vigorous frame and buoyant hopes are wilted in the bloom, and lie withered in the dust ; and limits the footsteps of the man, whose sun goes down at noon, who is unexpectedly detached from the teeming projects and extended plans of earth, and called to consummate his arrangements of righteous or unrighteous, praiseworthy or guilty enterprises, "where there is no work, nor knowledge, nor device."

What is your life ? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. The man who boasts himself of to-morrow knows not what a day may bring forth. God is the Being in whose hand his breath is. As for man, his days are as grass ; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth ; for "the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more." There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death ; and there is no discharge in that war. Our days are determined ; the number of our months is with him ; he has appointed our bounds that we can not pass. No precaution, no prudence, no medical skill can go beyond the limit prescribed by God. Death comes, and in a moment sweeps us away, and all our plans and enterprises for-

ever. Riches can not bribe disease, nor lock the gates of the tomb. Ask the conqueror of a hundred battles if there is not a conqueror mightier than he? Inquire, one by one, of the sons and daughters of men, as they stand on the verge of this short life, and there is not one that must not confess that he lives, and moves, and has his being in God. There is no higher proof of their universal and absolute dependence than that there is an hour, unknown to themselves and appointed by God, when men and all their plans vanish from beneath the sun; when their expectation perisheth, and length of days is cut short by the king of terrors.

But this is not all. There is one additional thought which gives emphasis to all the preceding illustrations. Our

VI. Sixth remark, therefore, is, that *the agency of God is no less concerned with our religious character and prospects than with our temporal condition.*

This is no unnatural conclusion. It is reasonable to suppose it should be so, because our religious character and prospects are more important to us and to others, and more interesting to God himself, than our temporal condition. He who "is the father of the rain, and begetteth the drops of the dew," may well be recognized as the Author of all spiritual blessings. An infinitely wise

and good Being would not direct the less and overlook the greater.

The circumstances, also, which we have already seen his providence does decide, usually excite so powerful an influence on religious character and prospects, that, in deciding the former, he not unfrequently decides the latter. Nothing is more certain than that the hand of God is discernible in the *diversity of religious privileges*; and nothing is more certain than this affects religious character, and extends itself into eternity. One nation is covered with the veil of anti-Christian error; another is shrouded in gross imposture, and turned aside after fables; another is merged in the darkness of paganism; while another is cheered by the light of life, and gladdened by the tidings of salvation. In Christian lands men are cast, and often without any consent of their own, into different sections of the Church of God, widely differing in the purity and power of the means of grace and salvation. Some inhabit the peaceful village, where simplicity of habit, and sound morality, and a close inspection of character exert their restraining influence; while others are thrown upon a crowded population, where wickedness is more easily concealed, and where wealth and poverty, refinement and coarseness, and lawless vice nourish all the seeds of moral corruption. In every Christian locality there

are those who are trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, while others of the same community never pass under the bond of the covenant, and live and die orphans and exiles from God's visible family. Some pass their lives amid religious teachings rarely attended by divine influences, and where God's ministers labor in vain, and spend their strength for naught; while others dwell amid the bright and oft-recurring tokens of heaven's tenderest mercy, and opportunities that are the wisdom of God and the power of God to salvation. His people are "made willing in the day of his power;" some are taken, and others are left; "he hath mercy," not on as many as he *can*, but "on whom he *will* have mercy."

If, then, in such particulars as these, men are dependent on God, are they not dependent on him for their religious character and prospects? And is not this the teaching of the Holy Scriptures on this important subject? What is the import of such declarations as these: "The preparation of the heart in man is of the Lord;" "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy?" And as this: "I thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight?" If

any, therefore, are quickened when they were dead in trespasses and sins, it is God who quickens them. If any are made to differ from a world that lieth in wickedness, it is he who maketh them to differ. If, by grace, any are saved through faith, it is not of themselves; it is the gift of God. It is all gift and grace—unsearchable, immeasurable grace. If, in their onward progress, they enjoy the light of his countenance, it is because he who caused the light to shine out of darkness, shines in their hearts to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. If they are washed, and sanctified, and justified, it is in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. If they are weaned from the world and fitted for heaven—if they rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, so that when the earthly house of their tabernacle is dissolved, they know they have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens—he that hath wrought them for this self-same thing is God, who hath also given them the earnest of his Spirit. Where these gracious influences are imparted, men are redeemed from the dominion of sin and the curse of the law, and made meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light; where they are not imparted, men remain in the ruins of their apostasy, the breath of heaven, like the wind

which bloweth where it listeth, never breathing upon the valley of the slain.

If, then, men are dependent on God in all these articles of their history, may we not demand, In what are they not dependent? If he decides the time and place of their birth—if he imparts their physical constitution and intellectual capacity—if he directs their occupations and dispenses their different measures of success—if he decides the time and circumstances of their death, and if his providence and grace are no less concerned with their religious character and prospects, then does he, the Lord of heaven and earth, emphatically preside over the destinies of all mankind.

From this main thought of our discourse, thus illustrated, we may deduce the following remarks. We can not avoid the conclusion,

1. In the first place, that *the great God exerts an uncontrollable sovereignty over all the concerns of men.*

By the sovereignty of God we understand his dispensing his goodness and mercy to whomsoever he will. It is not the dispensing of deserved evil; this is justice; it is the dispensing of undeserved good; and in this he is governed by his own royal prerogative of doing what he will with his own. We read much of this sovereignty of God in the Scriptures. We hear much of it, as a *doctrine*, from the pulpit. And do we not read

the same lesson in his providence? True doctrine is but a truthful statement of *facts*. This unwelcome doctrine of the divine sovereignty is but a truthful *statement of facts* as they exist in the empire of the Most High. Men there are, not willing to give God the throne, who dispute it as a doctrine, and quarrel with it as a doctrine; but what does it avail them to question *facts*, and quarrel with *stubborn facts*? We can not advert to the induction of particulars in this discourse without perceiving that the dependence of man and the sovereignty of God are correlative truths, and stand abreast of one another. God's will is not arbitrary; but it is effective, and just in the way, and through the means of his wise appointment. "Whatever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, and in all deep places." Every thing shows this, from the most exalted to the meanest, from the most comprehensive to the most minute. No time, no place, limits his prerogative. Some are more favored than others; there is this diversity every where—in creation, in providence, and in grace. Human merit is not the reason for it; its cause, its reason, are found in God alone.

"Chained to his throne a volume lies,
Big with the fates of men."

"He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven and amid all the inhabitants of the earth."

He wills nothing without reason—nothing without the best of reasons; but he giveth no account of any of his matters.

“Here he exalts neglected worms
To sceptres and a crown,
And there the following page he turns,
And treads the monarch down.
Not Gabriel asks the reason why,
Nor God the reason gives;
Nor dares the favorite angel pry
Between the folded leaves.”

Who knoweth the mind of the Lord? or, being his counselor, hath instructed him? His counsel to us is, “Be still, and know that I am God!” God is God. This is enough for every right-hearted man. “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight!”

2. Most true is it, then, in the second place, that *the divine government may well be the joy of our world.*

Tell us, if you can, of one in whose hands all the affairs of this tumultuous and revolutionary world may be more safely intrusted than in his. Is it not better, infinitely better, that the destiny of nations and of men should be under his control than their own? Put your finger upon the paragraph of this world's history in which a single act of God is recorded that savors of weakness, or wrong doing, or tyrannical oppression, or unrighteous partiality, or the wanton exercise

of power, or the impulse of hasty passion, or capricious agency of any kind. "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid; for how, then, shall God judge the world?" It is not in God to do this. There is nothing of this in his nature, and nothing like it in his conduct. Every event in his providence is the result of a strong and irresistible love of right, and, so far as he is concerned, a strong and irresistible impulse to do what is best. He wills nothing, he does nothing that has not the sanction of infinite wisdom and goodness. We have, moreover, this assurance, that he rules over this lost world with a peculiar sway, and governs it in mercy by Jesus Christ. "Fury is not in him." He has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked." We may be content that "dominion is with him." We may be thankful that he assumes the responsibility, and is so competent to direct the affairs of this world to wise results. We may indeed be happy because God is on the throne. Oh, it is a joyous thought. God is our refuge and strength. The nations may rage, and the people imagine a vain thing; but the Lord sitteth in the heavens. Sweet is the safety and serene the joy. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice! Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, and let men say among the nations, the Lord reigneth!"

3. We would give force to the truth, also, which

this subject suggests, in the third place, that *the control which God exercises over the destiny of men does not in any way interfere with their own accountability.* Our own consciousness decides that we are accountable. So reason teaches. Our agency may be dependent, but it is not the less moral and free on that account. Our very dependence is one of the grounds of our responsibility, because it gives rise to our moral freedom. God may control our condition, he may govern our choice, but, so long as it remains *choice*, it is our own, we are responsible for it. We are free and responsible by necessity, and can not help being so. We can no more cease to be accountable than we can cease to exist. In all our moral conduct we are obliged to act as we please, and can not act in any other way. If any man will try to do right or to do wrong, without choosing or wishing to do so, he will find that the thing is impossible. This surely does not destroy freedom. Our moral conduct, therefore, is as much *our own* as though we acted independently of God. Moral character and conduct do not depend upon the *cause* of them, but upon their *own nature* as right or wrong. Thus the Bible teaches us by those numerous biographical sketches in which they present man's dependence and responsibility; and also when they didactically teach us that we ourselves are bound to do that

which "God worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure." Every where the Scriptures treat us as accountable. And so common sense teaches. Our fellow-men treat us as such, and we treat them in like manner. We approve their conduct when they do right, and when they do wrong we condemn it; and, in defiance of all our cavils, we hold ourselves to the same responsibility. Conscience teaches the same, and the day of judgment will proclaim it when heaven rejoices and hell trembles at the last sentence. There are first truths that are too obvious to be demonstrated. Man's responsibility is one of the great principles in moral science which it is *insanity* to deny. Men can not long practice such deception on themselves. There is no subject of his government in the universe whom God so controls as to infringe upon his moral liberty and leave him unaccountable.

4. In the fourth place, our subject *reminds us of the solemn and affecting condition of men as the creatures and subjects of the Most High.* Where we are, God always is. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, whither shall I flee from his presence?" Whoever and whatever is at a distance, God is near. By whoever else we are unseen and unobserved, God, himself unseen, sees us. We are always in his sight and in his hands. He is not far from every one of us; he is carry-

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ing every one of us in his hand every moment. We can not go a step without him; in "him we live, and move, and have our being." Where we shall go, in what localities we shall dwell, what pursuits we shall follow, what objects we shall see, what associations we shall form, what good we shall enjoy and what ills await us, when and where we shall live and die—all this is with God. We can not foresee an hour, nor a single event in our future history. No experience, no strength of intellect, and habits of thought and calculation, can rescue us from this perfect dependence. So absolute and universal is it, that there is not the brightest mind among the myriads of our race who can predict his next thought.

Thus solemn and affecting are our relations to the omnipresent God, every moment, every breath, every throbbing pulse. We may as well attempt to flee from ourselves as from God. And this relation will be as intimate and momentous through interminable ages as it is now. Whether we ascend to heaven or sink to hell, we shall still be in the hand of God.

What strange stupidity is it, then, that would fain put God at a distance! And what marvel that they are "without hope" who are "without God in the world!" Who is this that says, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" Miserable man, to be thus

an exile, an outcast from the first Fair and the first Good! Miserable man, not assiduously to cultivate an intimacy with thy Maker! Oh, “acquaint *now* thyself with him, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee.”

5. In the fifth and last place, let us learn from our subject *to acknowledge God in all our ways, that he may direct our paths.*

This habitual acknowledgment is but giving him his due. It is honorable to him, and it is safe for us; for it is the great means of his own appointment, by which his relations to us, and ours to him, shall be the relations, not of judgment, but of mercy—not of the righteous and unbending Lawgiver, but of a loving and gracious Father—not of jealousy and fear, but of confidence and hope. “I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my rock, my buckler, my high tower, and the horn of my salvation.” This is the relation you may cultivate with him. You may think of your constant dependence upon him, and say, “This God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.” If you desire this guidance, cultivate a sense of his presence, and set him always before your face that your feet may not be moved. If you desire this guidance, *seek* it. “Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the

day dark with night; who calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the earth; the Lord is his name." Seek him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by those humble and affectionate supplications that form an avowal of your dependence, and give him the throne and the praise. Seek him when you most feel your dependence, and when, in the deep consciousness of your own abjectness, nothing so revives your drooping heart as to draw nigh unto God. It is by this intercourse with him that you will "endure as seeing him who is invisible;" will learn to confide in him; will find a place near him, and have the sweet assurance that "blessed is the man whom he chooseth, and causeth to approach unto him." Go daily to his throne. You can not prosper without God. Just think what a rich inheritance it is to have the God of heaven for your friend. Millions of worlds can not purchase it; it is his own gift, through his own and well-beloved Son. Oh ye who have other gods before him, forget not that great and good Being who can do more for you and more against you than all the universe besides. Ye whose buoyant hearts are full of hope, and ye whose trembling hopes border on despair—ye whose bright course is full of promise, and ye whose perplexities are like the dark cloud which obscures the summer sun—ye old, ye

young, ye middle-aged, ye cheerful, ye disconsolate, seek the good you pant after where you will, but you can not find it apart from God. God has formed you for himself alone; restless is the heart until it rests on him. It may rest on him. Apostate and wanderer as it is, it may return to him, and rest on him through the merits of his Son. No sooner does an apostate and sinful creature open his eyes to see what God is, and how he has offended him, and how just the sentence is that condemns him, than he feels that he has no claim on God, and is dependent upon that grace which reigns through our Lord Jesus Christ. *You* are such a sinner, and need the repose of this dependence, and this free and sovereign grace. Here, then, in the Lord Jesus, is the rest you need, because here is both your righteousness and your strength. Your way of pardon and life is not in yourself; and it is God's command and invitation that you abandon every other hope, feel your need of a Savior, see that the Savior he has provided is the very Savior you need, and deliberately make choice of him as all your salvation and all your desire.

SERMON VII.

RIGHT THOUGHTS LEAD TO RIGHT EMOTIONS.

MARK, xiv., 72.—“*And when he thought thereon, he wept.*”

THE history and character of the Apostle Peter are among the most interesting and instructive in the sacred writings. They are both delineated with such distinctness and consistency, there is such singular force and individuality about them, that an impartial reader of the New Testament must acknowledge that they are not fictitious or studied portraits, and that the Gospel narrative which presents them is no fabrication. Just as every man's vices are peculiarly his own, so are every man's virtues. The Christian always meliorates the man; but rarely, if ever, is the man completely lost in the Christian. The graces of Peter were modified by his peculiar temperament. They assumed a different phase and color in him from that which the same graces assumed in the other apostles. There was nothing cold, nothing phlegmatic in his constitution. He was sanguine in his projects, rash in his movements, tender in his attachments, and exposed to change from the

very impetuosity and ardor of his feelings; with more of courage than of fortitude, more of zeal than of firmness, more of confidence than of constancy. The native ardor of his temper is perpetually breaking out, and especially in the circumstances of that affecting hour when he denied his divine Master.

Jesus was now arrested, hurried away to trial, and entirely in the power of his enemies. Alarmed, disappointed, and confounded, his hitherto faithful disciples forsook him and fled. Peter, however, follows him "afar off" to the palace of the high-priest. There he was suspected, and once, and again, and a third time, challenged as a disciple of the despised Nazarene. He denies it. He denies it a second time. A third time he denies it; and, as though his simple denial were not enough, he confirms it by oaths and curses. Faithless, miserable man, the prey of a guilty conscience, "he shrinks into the covert of his own shame!" "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Such a look at such a moment—he could not endure it. At his first denial, "he went out into the porch, and the cock crew." When he "began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man of whom ye speak," the cock crew a "second time. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice."

And "when he *thought* thereon, he *wept*;" he "went out and wept *bitterly*."

They are not the incidents of his fall and recovery, affecting as they are, on which we propose to dwell, but rather the fact that, when he *thought* of his fall, they were thoughts that so affected him. God works by means, and means that are adapted to the intellectual and moral character of men. It is the great law of his kingdom that *right thoughts* lead to *right emotions*—*gracious thoughts* to *gracious affections*—*holy thoughts* to a *holy character and a holy life*. Our object in this discourse will be best accomplished by showing the connection between devout thoughts and devout affections, and, as in the case of Peter, the connection between such thoughts and true repentance.

I. We are, in the first place, to speak of the general principle suggested by the text—the *connection between devout thoughts and devout affections*.

Though every thing around us, especially in the moral world, is fitted to call the mind to deep and serious thought, and to teach us important lessons of heavenly wisdom, the mass of mankind are *thoughtless*. They pass their dreamy existence here as though there were no God and no hereafter. The great effort of the God of nature and the God of grace—the great design of the

Bible, the Sabbath, and the pulpit, is to awaken this thoughtless world to *solemn thoughts and serious contemplation*. It is this habit of serious thought that best incorporates the truths of God's word with the frame of our own minds, and that makes the religion of the Gospel part and parcel of our intellectual being.

But it is no easy matter to raise our minds to these high meditations. Even thinking men do comparatively little solid and intense thinking. For the most part, their ordinary thoughts are exceedingly desultory, and vary according to the variety of objects presented to their minds. In the ordinary pursuits of the world, most persons are under the necessity of attending to objects superficially and promiscuously, so that they seem to attend to many things at once, and to nothing distinctly. But, in its best moments and unobstructed meditations, the mind is fixed upon a few objects. The things upon which we meditate then absorb the attention, to the exclusion of all sensible influence of common objects. Not unfrequently the minds of good men are so rapt in devout meditation that they scarcely know "whether they are in the body or out of the body." Their attention is fixed upon religious subjects so intensely and so constantly, that all other objects seem to vanish from their sight and lose their wonted influence. There are seasons

in which, in this respect, they are singularly favored. It may be in the house of God; it may be in their closets, and in the sequestered hour of prayer; it may be in the night watches, or it may be amid the din of the world. They view the truths of God's word as they never viewed them before. The veil between time and eternity seems to be drawn aside, and what once appeared mere phantoms have now become sober and solid realities. When the mind is heedlessly roving from object to object, nothing appears *real*; but when wandering thoughts are called in, and trivial objects are excluded, it has a fair opportunity of viewing important objects in their true greatness, and great objects in their true importance; and, where it is thus employed, there is nothing to prevent or impede the most sensible exercise of devout affections.

Our affections always follow the train of our thoughts, and our actions always follow the train of our affections. Could we always know what men think, we could very nearly determine how they feel; and could we determine how they feel, we could with some certainty determine how they would act. Warm and lively emotions are the natural fruit of deep meditation, and especially upon solemn and interesting subjects. A pious mind always kindles into devotion in view of affecting truths seriously contemplated. Those

who love God's truth can not meditate upon it without loving it; and the more intensely they meditate upon it, the more ardently will they love it. Serious thought is the only preparative for serious emotion. It is impossible to have emotions toward objects or truths which we do not perceive. When men perceive, they feel; and if they are thinking of God's truth, and are right-minded and right-hearted men, their emotions are elevated and pure. From their nature as creatures of intellect and emotion, if they see clearly, they feel strongly.

Deep and intense meditation *of any kind* never fails to excite warm and lively emotions. Wicked men become ardent in their feelings, and zealously engaged in effecting their designs, by intensely fixing their thoughts upon the great object of their desires and pursuit. The covetous become more covetous by thinking of their treasures; the licentious more licentious by dwelling upon their pleasures; the proud become vain by meditating upon their merit; the ambitious more ambitious by meditating on their preferment; and the revengeful more malignant by frequently dwelling on the objects of their malignity. Pharaoh rose to the violence of his rage by meditating on the deliverance which God granted to Israel by the hand of Moses. "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil;

my lust shall be satisfied upon them ; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them !” Nebuchadnezzar rose to the zenith of his pride by meditating often and long upon the mighty deeds which he had accomplished. “Is not this great Babylon which I have built ?” Other things being equal, the greatest power of emotion is always found allied to the greatest intensity of thought.

It is upon this same principle that good men are inspired with holy affections. It is by taking time and opportunity for meditation upon religious subjects. Religious meditation makes a good man as humble as irreligious meditation makes a wicked man proud. By the one a wicked man’s affections become more groveling and worldly, by the other a good man’s affections become more heavenly and devout. The benevolent affections of Howard became more benevolent by the steadfast attention of his thoughts to the degradation and misery of his fellow-men. The Psalmist tells us that “while he was *mus- ing*, the fire burned.” He was meditating upon the frailty, mutability, and vanity of man. And it is no marvel that the sacred flame broke forth from his lips while meditating upon a subject which kings are most prone to banish from their thoughts. “My heart was hot within me,” says he ; “then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my

days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am." Such warm and lively emotions were the natural fruit of deep meditation upon so solemn and interesting a subject. What good man's heart would not be kindled into devotion in view of truth so serious and so affecting? The most affecting way in which God teaches his people is by directing their thoughts from trivial and unimportant subjects to those that are serious and important. They can not meditate upon the great realities of his Word, upon the great realities of his redemption and his and their eternity, without warm and lively emotions. It is true they may sometimes try to meditate and not be able, because they can not fix their thoughts. But when they do fix them, the vital spark is kindled to a flame, and the bosom that it warms expands and beats high with pure affection and holy fervor. The children of God have ever found that serious meditation tends to enliven religious affections. Their best meditations are succeeded by a glow of spiritual emotions. "*My meditation* of him," says the Psalmist, "shall be *sweet*." Read the book of Psalms, and mark how those sweet trains of religious thought are incessantly followed by a glow of inspired emotion, such as could never have been expressed except by one who had thought so much and so intensely upon divine subjects as this devout

Psalmist. Read the book of Nehemiah and the book of Daniel, and you will see that, by their deep and prolonged meditation, their devout affections were raised to an elevation and a tenderness for the glory of God and his suffering Church which have never been surpassed. It was after days of solemn thought that the hearts of these holy men at length broke out in those memorable supplications which to the present hour are the best examples of prayer for Zion and her sons. Time would fail me to tell of John in Patmos, of Paul caught up to the third heavens, and of godly men and godly women whose highest and most heavenly affections were allied to their most serious thoughts. You can not extensively have read Christian biography without perceiving that, in a greater or less degree, the godly of every age have found this happy effect of this contemplative mind. Their hearts correspond with their thoughts. The Apostle Paul felt the importance of these thoughts when he said to his son Timothy, "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. *Meditate* upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all." The experience of the most unlettered and the most learned Christian alike bear testimony to the connection between religious meditation and devout affections. Taught by the Spirit of God to look less upon and think

less of things that are seen and temporal, and to look more and think more of things that are unseen and eternal, the humblest Christian on God's footstool sees and adores. His thoughts become emotional, and his lips are tuned with praise. Such is the connection between devout thoughts and devout affections. Such is the mental law of grace.

This general principle of God's gracious government we now apply,

II. In the second place, to that particular class of thoughts and affections indicated by the fall and repentance of Peter, and for the purpose of showing that, when men repent of their sins, it is by *thinking* of them in their true character and enormity.

"When he thought thereon, he wept." He had much to think of, and much to weep over. Had any one known his thoughts after his treachery, he might easily have known what his emotions were; and had he known what his emotions were, he might have safely predicted what his future conduct would be. He had committed a sin of great enormity, and under circumstances that greatly aggravated the enormity of his crime. It was the sin of deliberate falsehood, thrice repeated, and aggravated by oaths and curses. He had been the companion and intimate friend of the Savior, yet he boldly declared, "I know not the

man." At a time when the Jews were in full expectation that the great Deliverer was to appear in the family of David, and when Jesus of Nazareth made his appearance, the poor son of a carpenter's wife, wandering from village to village, and not having where to lay his head, Peter had left all and followed him; and when his disciples were perplexed to know who and what he was, Peter boldly stepped forward, and made that brave and magnanimous confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Yet now, faithless and fallen, he openly declares, "I know not the man." Time was when, in the ardor of his faith, he set out to walk upon the waves to meet his Master; and when, because the billows were boisterous, he began to sink, and he cried out, "Lord, save, or I perish!" It was but the other day when Jesus washed his disciples' feet, and, as he came to Peter, he cries out, "Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet." But yesterday, in the garden of Gethsemane, when the multitude approached with swords and staves to arrest his Master, and Peter drew his sword, and, in defense of his injured Lord, smote one of the high-priest's servants. When the Savior was residing with him at Capernaum, and forewarned him that, with all the fervor of his attachment, he would one day deny his Lord, Peter replied with indignant confidence, "Though I should die with

thee, yet will I not deny thee." Yet now, in the crisis of his Master's trial, and the third time, he protests upon his oath that he knows nothing, and never has known any thing of Jesus of Nazareth. Ah! faithless Peter. He had, indeed, much to think of. He went out and wept bitterly. His fall was momentary. The Tempter thought that he had grasped his prey; but his malignity was disappointed. Peter went out and wept bitterly. That rebuking glance from his Master's eye, that look of pity, that look of love, dissolved him. He found pardon, yet he did not cease to mourn. He was a true penitent, and brought forth fruits meet for repentance. He *thought* of what he had done, and deeply *felt* the turpitude of his crime, and returned to his Master, the humble, devoted servant of Christ to his dying hour. Such is the alliance between right thoughts of sin; they produce penitence. Peter would not have wept over his wickedness if he had not thought of it; it was because he thought thereon that he wept bitterly.

We would impress this truth, that just and right thoughts of sin are indispensable to true repentance. That which ruins the soul is its insensate thoughtlessness. Let a man be awake to his true character as a sinner, and, if he does not become a penitent, it is because he grieves and resists the Spirit of God. So long as he is im-

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mersed in the world, and shuts out all serious thought, and makes light of God, and makes light of his holy law, he will make light of his sins. It may require effort to summon his thoughts to solemn consideration. The objects which were last in the mind, and have been habitually there, easily rush into it again; it is no easy matter to turn the current of thought. The first step in religious declension is not, as is often affirmed, the neglect of prayer; it is the neglect of religious meditation, and the first step toward true repentance is serious thought upon our sins. When good men become negligent in their meditations, they become negligent in their devotions; and when they become negligent in their devotions, then holy affections languish and die. When wicked men repel all serious meditation, they always become more hardened in sin. It is a good beginning if they are led to "consider their ways." "When I *thought upon my ways*," says the Psalmist, "I turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Men will never do as Peter did, "go out and weep bitterly," and mourn over their sins, until they consent to think of them. It is a painful view, for sin is an ugly thing to look at; but we must see it in some measure as it is, if we find pardon and peace, and if we ever forsake it. Those who are in a state of thoughtless impenitence must consent to have this calm and

equable state of mind disturbed, as Peter's was, and as theirs is and must be who are brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Men are afraid of religious excitement; but there is nothing irrational in being rationally convinced of sin. If sin is what God declares it to be, "the abominable thing which his soul hateth," no man can think of it too deeply or too soon. There can not be awakened too deep a sensibility for its evil nature, its hateful character, and its baleful influence and effects.

Think *what it is* to sin against the holy God. We hear him saying in his Word, "Oh, do not that abominable thing which I hate." Sin is "a transgression of his law;" that law which is binding on all rational creatures in heaven, on earth, and in hell; that law which was engraven by the finger of God on two tables of stone; that law which was proclaimed by the prophets, and recognized, and established, and honored by Jesus Christ; that law which is inscribed on the consciences of men, and is obligatory even on those who have no knowledge of God's revealed will. When Joseph in Egypt was solicited to violate one of the prohibitions of this law, he exclaimed, "How can I do this *great wickedness* and sin *against God!*" When David actually violated that same prohibition, he cried out, "Against *thee*, *thee only*, have I sinned, and done evil in thy

sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest." God hates sin, and God forbids it, because it is wrong—because it is "an evil thing and bitter"—because it is hostility to him, hostility to his character, hostility to his throne, hostility to all that is good, allied to all that is vile, and the root of all evil. It is an evil and odious thing. God's hatred of it is a reasonable and amiable hatred, and just such as is befitting a being of perfect moral rectitude. His absolute and peremptory prohibition of it is just such an authoritative expression of his will as becomes the rightful and holy Sovereign of the universe. In a virtuous and holy mind, in a law-abiding world, his prohibition of sin, and on such fearful penalties, ought to be enough to restrain the wrath of man in every form and degree. This evil nature of sin, to say nothing of its bitter consequences, is itself a sufficient reason why all who have committed it should loath and abhor it, and repent in dust and ashes. When the commandment came home to the conscience of the Apostle Paul, he saw what a sinner he was, and gave up all his hopes. "Sin, by the commandment, became exceedingly sinful." I was "alive," says he, "without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The effects of sin are bad enough; every sigh on earth, and every wail of

the pit, attests its bitterness, but they can not be compared with the evil and odious nature of sin itself. If the views of men of the evil of sin were such as they ought to be, they would recoil from it as from a moral pestilence—they would shun it as they would the bite of a serpent—they would hate it as God hates it, and with perfect hatred. And, in view of their own transgressions, they would “go out and weep bitterly.” A true penitent forsakes his sins, and mourns over them, because they are evil and hateful things. Because God hates and forbids them, the true penitent hates and forsakes them. This Peter did; and this all the friends of God do; and this all his enemies ought to do, for the same reasons. When they *think* of what they have done and what they have left undone, when their minds are truly awake to the evil of their conduct, if they have any right principles of action, or any right feelings of heart, they will turn from their evil way “with grief and hatred of their sin, with full purpose of and endeavors after new obedience.” Jesus Christ approved of the repentance of Peter because he saw that it arose from right views of his past conduct. It was not the sorrow of the world, but true godly sorrow.

After a man has taken some such view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, it becomes him also *to think of its aggravations*. “Some sins are, by

reason of several aggravations, more heinous in the sight of God than others." This truth is evident from various teachings in the sacred writings, as well as by the degree of horror with which they are regarded by the mind, and the severity with which they are condemned by conscience. The same sins committed by one man may be more atrocious when committed by another, because his station, his responsibilities, and his experience of God's goodness lay him under special obligations to avoid them. Some persons break over more and stronger restraints in their violations of the divine law than others. They tread under their feet all warning and entreaty; they break through the obstacles which hedge up their way, and, in defiance of all remonstrance, persist in their wickedness. Some sins are of so complicated a nature that they involve many sins in a single deed of wickedness. Some sins are committed more deliberately than others, and are committed presumptuously rather than from the impulse of sudden temptation. They are not only the result of deliberate purpose, but of artful contrivance, and the perpetrator boasts of them, and glories in his shame. Some sins are committed not only for the purposes of self-indulgence, but with malignity, and merely with the view of striking a blow at the happiness of others; not only injuring them in things tem-

poral, but corrupting their principles, demoralizing their habits, and ruining their souls. Some persons sin against greater measures of light and knowledge than others. Those who have been religiously educated, who have enjoyed the counsels and prayers of pious parents, and been trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, when they become profligate in principle or morals, are peculiarly criminal in the sight of God. Those who have enjoyed a clear and earnest dispensation of the Gospel, and frequent strivings of the Holy Spirit, and yet persist in sin and neglect the great salvation, will have a more fearful account to render at last, and a "sorer punishment," than the heathen who have no hope and are without God in the world. Some sins are more aggravated by the prolonged habit of sinning. Those there are who extenuate their profanity, or their intemperance, or their foul excesses in wickedness by the thought that it is impossible for them to break off the habit, little thinking what a fearful aggravation it is of their offenses that they are so addicted to them. Now what we ask is, that men should *think* of these aggravations of their wickedness—yes, *think* of them.

There are aggravations of sin, also, of a different kind. All sin is not only rebellion against the law of God, but bears the stigma of the *basest*

ingratitude. It tramples on the goodness of God, the greatest of benefactors. It dishonors the best of parents; our Father which is in heaven. It scorns his love which passes knowledge. Let a man count the expressions of the divine goodness, let him call to mind the days, and months, and years of the divine love, and bounty, and long-suffering, and then let him reckon up the days, and months, and years of cold neglect and indifference to his heavenly Father's will—of sin in so many forms, and in so many forms of enormity—of sins without number and without excuse, and must he not feel that he is deeply guilty before God? Let him search his heart—let him try his ways—let him *think* as David thought in the fifty-first Psalm—let him *think* as Peter thought when he went out and wept bitterly, and will he not say, “Oh, my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God, for my iniquities are increased over my head, and my trespass is grown up unto the heavens!”

Then let him *think* of the great ill desert of every one of these sins, so widely different from that which it is generally supposed to be. No man can measure the turpitude of a single sin. It is in its own nature ill-deserving, and always will be so. God so regards it; and what he once regards as ill-deserving, he always regards as ill-deserving. It admits of no excuse, no palliation,

no self-flattering unction. It deserves the "wrath of God from heaven against *all* unrighteousness and ungodliness of men." In an unrepenting man *not one* of all these sins is pardoned. Every one of them excludes him from the divine favor, and presence, and kingdom, and consigns him to a world where God never smiles, where mercy has no place, and where hope never comes, and where the remembrance of his sins, and not a flaming world, will most appal his soul. Oh, the unspeakable folly of that unthinking mind that makes light of sin? Sin—sin, what is it? It has the holy God for its enemy, man for its victim, death for its wages, hell for its final dwelling-place.

There is one more aggravation of sin which it becomes all to *think* of. It is the persevering sin of unbelief, in the persevering rejection of him who came to seek and save that which is lost. "If I had not come among them," says the Savior, "they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." This is the culminating point of human wickedness. When the Lord of glory emptied himself of the glory he had with the Father before the world was—when he who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich—when the holy and ever-blessed and honored One consented to take the sinner's place, to be numbered

with transgressors, and bear the sin of many, and, without a murmur, endure the shame, and sink under the agonies of that ignominious and torturing cross—it was that, by the substitution of himself in the room and place of the guilty, he might make such a satisfaction to divine justice in virtue of which pardon and life might be offered to all, and secured to all who repent and believe the Gospel. His obedience unto the death of the cross is an atonement, a satisfactory expiation, an expiatory equivalent for *all* these sins and *all* their aggravations, if men will but consent to accept it on the conditions of grief and sorrow for their sins, and honest and persevering efforts after a new and holy life. And to those who will not thus come unto Christ that they might have life, *this* is the great and crowning aggravation of their wickedness, because it shows that they had rather have their sins and go to hell, than leave their sins and go to heaven. Here we see what sin is, and what it will do. This is the “front of its offending.” It crucifies the Savior afresh, and puts him to an open shame. The devils themselves have not sinned after any such sort as this. It is the foul stain upon the character of *man*, upon the world for which the Savior died, and where we dwell. It is *rejecting* this holy salvation. It is rejecting and opposing with all the heart the salvation of the Gospel.

It is the damning sin, and the sin which binds upon all the transgressors of God's holy law all the guilt of all their other sins. It is resistance to the last call of heaven's love. It is trampling under their feet the most moving and melting considerations of heaven's love. It involves the highest contempt of God, and of that glory which shines in the face of Jesus Christ. It is a sin against the soul. It is the very sin that kills it; it separates it from God and holiness forever. Oh, it is a cruel sin. It is everlasting suicide thus to throw the soul away and rush upon an undone eternity.

Beloved hearers, when you *think* of these things, will you not go out and weep bitterly? When Peter thought thereon he wept, and found mercy. He found mercy from that heart of love which had been perforated by his lying and profane tongue. And so may you find it thus, and find it there; but not elsewhere, and in no other way. There is no other name given under heaven. There is but this one sacrifice. Away from the cross there is no hope.

"No bleeding bird, nor bleeding beast,
Nor hyssop branch, nor sprinkling priest,
Nor running brook, nor flood, nor sea,
Can wash the dismal stain away.

"Jesus, my God, thy blood alone
Hath power sufficient to atone;
Thy blood can make me white as snow;
No Jewish types could cleanse me so."

There is infinite sufficiency here. Enough, enough and to spare. Resources of pardon and holiness are here, never to be exhausted. Sin is no obstacle. However vile, however many, however aggravated, however indurated in the soul by habit, time, and years, it shall all be forgiven and forgotten through that infinite mercy that abounds more than your sin abounds. Saul was a blasphemer, a murderer; Peter was a profane fisherman; John Newton was a foul-mouthed, profane young man, who knew no law but his guilty passions, and had no object but gain; John Bunyan was a low-bred man, "who had few equals for cursing and swearing, lying, and blaspheming the holy name of God;" but, through grace abounding, they have all entered the heavenly city; and so may you as well as they. Great sinners there are in hell, and because they rejected this salvation. As great sinners there are also in heaven, because they accepted this salvation. Dear hearers, will you not accept it, and trust him who is "mighty to save?" Will you not go to the throne and say with the Psalmist, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, FOR IT IS GREAT?" You need not despair if you will come to Jesus. He had much rather save than damn you, if you are willing to be saved in his own way. His voice to you to-day is, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden,

and I will give you rest." He means *you*. It is *to you* he speaks when he says, "Whosoever will, let him take the waters of life freely." The time is coming when you will say, Why did I turn a deaf ear to the counsels of heaven's tenderest mercy? Why did I not flee to the blood of the cross? Why did I not listen while it is called to-day? And bitter, most bitter will be such self-reproaches. You will be crushed under them. You can not escape them, because you can not run away from yourself. Ah! you will think of these things then, and you will go and weep bitterly. It will be a world of tears. *Think*, then, now. Think of your soul, and then think of his free, rich, immeasurable, everlasting mercy, whose blood makes the foulest clean. Oh, look up to-day to that cross, and oh, thou fearful, go and cast thy burden there. I would like you to say—nay, the angels of God, with whom there is joy over *one* sinner that repenteth, would rejoice to hear you say,

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
I come, O Lamb of God, I come.

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
I come, O Lamb of God, I come.

"Just as I am, though toss'd about
With many a conflict, many a doubt;

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Fighting and fears within, without,
I come, O Lamb of God, I come.

"Just as I am—thy love unknown,
Has broken every barrier down.
Now to be thine—yea, *thine alone*,
I come, O Lamb of God, I come."

SERMON VIII.

LOST AND ABUSED MERCIES REMEMBERED.

LUKE, xvi., 25.—“*Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.*”

IN whatever world the righteous and the wicked will hereafter dwell, they will live forever. Not only will they live on, but this deathless existence will possess all its capacities for happiness and misery, not merely unimpaired, but in progressive vigor and sensitiveness. Its perceptions will be more clear, its thoughts stronger, its affections more ardent, its imagination more vivid, and its *memory* more searching and faithful. “*Son, remember !*”

In the present world the memory may become slothful, and languid, and obscured; in the world to come it is active, unsleeping, and faithful. The impressions once made upon it are not forgotten. In the present world there are circumstances which determine the will to retain some remembrances in preference to others; in the world to come the will is no longer the master, nor are its preferences consulted. *Conscience* is the master-faculty then; nor is it any longer at

the pleasure of the memory to leave a trace of the past behind. Every thing in the history of the wickedest man in this world of wickedness, however long since forgotten, becomes, as it were, a present reality, and forms a part of the man himself. Miserable, most miserable of men! if it were only from his reflections on the past.

Lazarus had descended to the tomb, and "was borne by angels to Araham's bosom." The rich man "also died, and was buried. And *in hell* he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame!" He was a rich Jew; he "had Abraham to his father," and hoped that Abraham would acknowledge the bond. It was a small boon that he craved—but a single drop of water to cool his tongue. Although he was a reprobate and lost, yet the glorified patriarch addressed him in the paternal words, "*Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things!*" They were affecting words. The curtain was lifted which let in the light of eternity upon the past history of this wretched man, and upon his remembered mercies. A creature of God exiled from his presence—a man but yesterday rolling in wealth, and to-day

begging for a drop of water to cool his tongue—an immortal being, in the regions of despair, looking back, from want and woe, upon the mercies he once enjoyed in the present world—what a spectacle is this!

Our object in the present discourse, painful as the employment is, is to contemplate this sad spectacle. Come with me and behold it. Ye especially who may not believe there is a hell, and ye who vainly imagine that a life of worldly joy and forgetfulness of God will be forgotten, and leave no remaining vestige upon your character and doom, come with me and contemplate this sad spectacle. In order to give some method to our thoughts, I remark,

I. In the first place, the good things of the present life will be remembered hereafter *in all their variety and richness*.

Memory can not count them now, for they “are more in number than the sand.” It will count them then, and dwell upon them all. There is the intellectual and immortal existence which God has given, as well as the more unnoticed blessings which might have rendered that existence virtuous, useful, and happy. There is *time*, year passing after year, to look back upon. There are opportunities of intellectual cultivation and improvement by which the lost sinner was distinguished, and which gave him standing and

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influence in the world. He occupied stations of responsibility; honors were heaped upon him, and power was intrusted to his hand. Years of health and cheerfulness rolled over him, and his sky was rarely overshadowed with a cloud. Wealth and treasure was in his house, and he was "clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." He *remembers* such things as these. Nor can he blot from his thoughts those objects of venerated or fond affection, nor those hallowed friendships which cheered him in his toil, refreshed him in his languor, made his bed in his sickness, solaced him in his woe, and gave excitement to his joys. Nor does he forget his religious and spiritual privileges, ushered into being, as he was, under the mediatorial reign of the Son of God, and in a land of Bibles and Sabbaths. It may be that the atmosphere in which he drew his earliest breath was the atmosphere of piety—that the bosom on which he so often reposed was the bosom that early consecrated him to God—that the relations, and truths, and motives, and obligations, and hopes which he was made first clearly to understand were those which bound him to holiness and heaven—that the first vivid example that caught his eye was the sweet example of godliness, and the first prayer to which he ever listened was the fervent supplication that *he* might be guided into the way of life.

Many a solemn season in the sanctuary is remembered, when the Gospel came home to his conscience with convincing power—when he trembled and wept, and was almost persuaded to be a Christian, and when it cost him many a struggle to resist, and many a sad hour to overcome the strivings of God's Spirit. He well remembers this day of grace, and this world of penitence and hope. This golden season, with all its offers of mercy, all its forbearance and long-suffering, all its opportunities of securing a happy eternity, belonged as really to him as to those whom he sees dwelling at God's right hand. He looks back now and sees, what was so difficult to be convinced of in the present world, that he had no more obstacles to surmount, no greater difficulties to remove, no heavier discouragements to struggle with, no more subtle or violent temptations to overcome, and no deeper depravity than have been felt and conquered by the "multitudes which no man can number" who asked, and sought, and knocked at the gates of heavenly mercy, and who now rejoice with Abraham and Lazarus.

Such are some of the "good things" he *remembers*, the bright scenes he looks back upon. He sees how they decked the vale of earth with smiles, made him the "prisoner of hope," and brought him within reach of the cross, its par-

dons, its peace, its holiness, and its heaven. He remembers them, but they are neither welcome nor pleasant memories. He would *forget* them, *could* he but *forget*! but no, he can not forget. Could but some dark wave of oblivion roll over him! No, never! No such alleviation attends the retrospect. Never was memory tasked with so burdensome a service until she came to these dwellings of despair; and the more disheartening, because,

II. In the next place, these good things are all remembered *as irrecoverably and forever lost*.

Nothing remains to such a man beyond the grave except an immortal existence and a sinful and guilty character. As he brought nothing into this world, so he shall carry nothing out. Every thing in the form of *good*, whether given or acquired, is irrecoverably lost. The monarch carries with him no crown, and no more honors than the slave. The man of power is as powerless as the worm. The rich man has left his riches, and is as poor as Lazarus at the gate. Pleasure grows not on that sterile soil; social joy withers amid the burning tares; and tenderness and love are suffocated in the smoke that goes up like the smoke of a great furnace. Friendships there are none; true friends dwell far away beyond the impassable gulf. No offices of affection and kindness are there; no sweet voices to cheer the

gloom, and no hand of tenderness to minister to the suffering; or, if those who were once the sufferer's friends are there, their love is turned to hate; they are companions of his misery only, and augment and irritate his woes. There is nothing there to gratify his senses, please his taste, satisfy his thirst for knowledge, or in any way divert his mind from desolating disappointment. Nature has no beauty there, and art no embellishments. His honors and distinctions have faded away; he has no reputation nor influence, and lives only to encounter neglect, ignominy, and shame. Parental instruction neither encourages nor admonishes him now. There is no Bible in that gloomy prison-house; no light of Sabbaths visits it; no sanctuary invites him to the mercy-seat, and no ministry of reconciliation speaks to him of the "sinner's Friend." These days of mercy are fled, and "the things which belonged to his peace are hidden from his eyes." There is no solicitude nor prayer for him on earth or in heaven. The thousand unheeded influences which once would fain have urged him to flee from the coming wrath, have accomplished their work and left him to an undone eternity. The holy Spirit of God strives with him no more; its soft dews never fall on those blighted fields of death. The sun of heaven does not shine there, nor do its balmy breezes cheer. He dwells in

darkness, and gropes amid the exhalations of the pit. He is abandoned to a reprobate mind, and not another offer of mercy will reach him. He has lost the last opportunity to retrace his steps, and is sealed over to remediless ruin.

What a reverse in his condition is this! He has not a drop of water to cool his tongue—not a rag, a leaf to protect him from the searching eye and burning wrath of God. It is a world of pinching want, but no supply; of craving desire, but no gratification; of restless, agonizing entreaty, but no return; of insupportable helplessness and suffering, but the helper is far away. Oh, how the thought wrings and tears his heart, that the last sands of life are fallen from the glass, and the last pulse told! Under what self-tormenting fury does he sink, and how does it add bitterness to his cup and fuel to the flames to look back upon these lost mercies! What gloom, what insupportable depression must settle upon the soul thus shut out from hope, and thus reminded that “he in his lifetime received his good things?”

There is another painful thought in this retrospect.

III. It is, in the third place, that these good things are all remembered *as wickedly abused and perverted*.

The true and inherent tendency of them all

was to lead the sinner to repentance ; to make him grateful and obedient, holy and happy. But they have all been perverted from their fitting and appropriate tendency, unwisely and wickedly abused, and, instead of being employed as the means of thoughtfulness, conviction, penitence, and peace, have been employed to purposes of thoughtlessness, obduracy, and death. Every stream of this rich and varied goodness, instead of bearing on its bosom the blessings of life and salvation, has been forced from its native bed, and made the conductor of pestilence and the curse. God told his ancient people that "he would curse their blessings—yea, that he had cursed them already." Nor are there many truths which the lost sinner feels more deeply than this. Though the good things which God gave him in his lifetime were in every view *good things*, and unfeigned expressions of the divine love and kindness, the abuser of them is no better for them, but the worse. He himself sees this. They have been of no sort of use to him ; he has had too many of them for his own good. His heart was set on them ; he pursued them with eagerness ; nothing could assuage his thirst for them. "God gave him his request, but sent leanness into his soul." They made strong and tender appeals to his conscience and heart on behalf of the great Giver, but he did not heed them,

and gave his heart to other gods before *Him*. They furnished him the opportunity of doing good, but he employed them for the gratification of his own pride and selfishness. Through a thousand agencies he might have enlightened the ignorant, relieved the poor, comforted the distressed, and been eminently useful in the world and in the Church, but he buried his talent in a napkin, and hid it in the earth, or treasured it up for those who came after him; he knew not who nor how it would be squandered. And now he sees his folly, and reflects upon it with remorse and bitter self-reproach. With anguish he remembers how time and talent, influence and station, money and power, business and pleasure, excluded God and eternity from his mind, and confirmed his attachment to things that are seen. It is no comfort to him now that he was popular with his fellow-men, and perhaps their idol. Earthly friends did but steal away his heart, and lead him to love the creature more than the Creator. Sanctified friendships and attachments are what God loves; but, ill-directed and unsanctified, they shut the soul out of heaven. We read of those who "would not go into the kingdom themselves, nor suffer those that were entering to go in." Such unhallowed influences will be remembered hereafter. It will add venom to the undying worm that men have not only been par-

takers in the sin of those whom they ought to have been instrumental in winning to piety, but the tempters and abettors to sins which destroy soul and body in hell. It will be a terrible thought that they have not only plunged into perdition themselves, but dragged those they once loved after them.

The same bitter reflection will also be associated with all the perverted means of grace and salvation. The man who goes down to hell from a Christian land and a Christian sanctuary—from a Christian family and training—from the baptismal altar and the offered blessings of the communion-table, will remember “whence he has fallen.” He will remember how every truth, every invitation, and every warning, made his hard heart harder and his blind eyes blinder. He will remember how that day of holy rest, instead of being to him a day of calm repose, and abstraction from the world, and fellowship with things unseen, and a pledge of “the rest that remaineth for the people of God,” was a weariness. Nor is it with regret less poignant that he remembers the abused Spirit of God, and how he did despite to this last effort of heaven’s tenderest mercy. No reflection will be more sad than that, under those sweet influences which would have attracted his soul toward God and heaven, he not only sinned with daring strength and rapidity, but, in

the madness of his depravity, shut up every avenue to conviction and made his destruction sure.

What an emphasis to his woe that he has thus been poisoning the very fountains of life, and that, by those very means and methods by which he might have climbed to the heavenly city, he has secured himself a place among the spirits of the lost! What stains of guilt do these abused and perverted blessings infix upon the soul, and for what a tremendous retribution do they lift up their voice! How deep the shade they throw over the gloom of that dark world, and how sad the lamentations they add to its wailing! With what a fearful weight do they lie on the conscience, and what vividness and intensity do they give to the horrors of perdition! Well is it written, "the prosperity of fools shall destroy them."

IV. I add, in the fourth place, these good things will all be remembered as *the means of self-destruction*.

"Oh, Israel! thou hast *destroyed thyself*." God is not the destroyer; his sovereignty is not the destroyer; his justice even is not the destroyer. Justice itself would make no exactions upon the sinner were he not an incorrigible enemy of the cross. It is the unrelenting and sturdy victim himself who puts the sword into the hands of the Avenger, or, rather, who plunges it into his own bosom. Wisdom, justice, mercy, would

have prevented the dire catastrophe, but the sinner himself stood in the way; he chose death rather than life. No stern and immutable decree destroys him; he destroys himself. God, justice, and his wise, holy decrees would never harm him, if the way of death were not his own chosen way, and he himself his own destroyer. Such is the influence of the great redemption, that the reasons for the divine determination to destroy him are all resolved into his own wicked character, and his voluntary abuse and perversion of the divine goodness and mercy. This is what God charges upon the sinner, and what the sinner will hereafter charge upon himself. The rich man in the parable *could not* have a drop of water to cool his tongue, *only* because, so long as he was an inhabitant of time, he *would not* choose the waters of life. The way in which he might have been saved was to employ the temporal and spiritual blessings which God gave him wisely, and turn them to good account. This he did not choose to do, and therefore he was finally lost. There is nothing more certainly established in heaven than the infallible connection between every man's choice in this life and his everlasting state in the next.

And this it is that renders the reflections of the sinner in hell so bitter when he calls to remembrance his lost and abused mercies. He

looks back and sees that he *did not choose* God for his portion, Christ for his Savior, the Holy Ghost for his sanctifier, and heaven for his home, but that he *did choose* this world as his portion, at the peril and expense of endless sin and woe. Most deeply does he feel, as he takes a retrospect of his past history, that there was nothing that could have prevented his salvation if he had chosen life, and nothing that could have prevented his destruction so long as he himself finally chose death. He *chose to die*, and this is the dart that wounds him. God gave him wealth, honor, religious privileges, Sabbaths, sermons, offers of pardon through his Son, restraints, convictions, tenderness; he bid him welcome to his love, and family, and table, and heaven, and urged him to "take the water of life freely," but he *would not*. Oh, this is the dart that wounds him. He has no excuse. He can not charge God foolishly. He can impute his destruction only to himself. It aggravates his condemnation to think that he has brought it upon his own soul. He had means, and motives, and blessings enough to have saved a thousand such sinners, but when God called he refused. And now these calls reproach him. Conscience reproaches him, for he can not silence her protestations. His reason reproaches him, and he is sensible that he has been acting the part of a madman. The Spirit of God re-

proaches him, nor can he ever forget his efforts to grieve him away—the struggle—the sad conflict—the lamented success. While others redeemed time, and pressed into the kingdom of God, he preferred to employ his day of grace, sometimes in the earnest and sometimes in the trifling pursuits and pleasures of the world, not only neglecting the “one thing needful,” but “filling up the measure of his iniquity.” And now he perceives that the *blame*, as well as the suffering consequent on his folly, rests on his own head. It is a melancholy review, and his reflections are melancholy. In this world of goodness and mercy, where “whoever will” may become meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, he became “a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction.”

Such a man’s lamentations are sad; he has no heart to repress, no courage to endure them. He has armed the “mercies of God” with weapons of destruction, and, as he surveys them and counts them up, he *weeps* at his unutterable folly. We read of the “outer darkness, where is *weeping*, and *wailing*, and *gnashing* of teeth;” and *this is it*. This is the *hell* of which he has so often been admonished, and into which he has rushed with such railroad speed. His eternity is, in no small part, employed in thus recounting the mercies he can never recall—abused and perverted goodness—good that has become the occasion of aggrava-

ted self-destruction, and that has established and riveted his choice of evil.

And, strange to say, he would not have it otherwise now; he has no love of God, no love of holiness and heaven; he shrinks from that rebuking purity, and would not look toward the ineffable glories of that bright throne. He has become strong in wickedness, and vigorous and perfectly unrelenting in his rebellion. He is no longer the man he was in this world of hope and mercy; the last traces of an amiable and attractive humanity have disappeared from his character, and he has become a partaker in the frenzy of fiends. His own thoughts have made him a *maniac*. He "curses God, and looks upward." Oh, how does he curse the day in which he was born, and wish that "it had never been joined to the days of the year!" Miserable man! better had he been friendless and houseless like Lazarus—better had he been stupid and untaught like the heathen—better had he been born and died an idiot—better a thousand times that he had been annihilated and crushed into non-existence, than thus doomed to that deathless eternity where none are greater sufferers than those whose memory most increases the intensity of their woe.

I know not how it is, my beloved hearers, that my own feelings so shrink from presenting to you such truths as these. I do not often present

them. I find them in the Bible; and there I find, too, that the blessed and adorable Savior presented them more frequently and more plainly than any other preacher whose instructions are there recorded. If he were to appear on earth again, he would speak, as he did in days of old, of the "damnation of hell," of the "worm that never dies and the fire that shall never be quenched," and of the solemnities of that day, when the King "shall say to those on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" Yet would we fain select different themes, and preach in a different strain. We would rather tell you of the love of God—of the all-sufficiency of the great atonement—of the free offers of pardoning mercy—of the blessed promises with which the Bible is filled, and of the sweet heaven of holiness, rest, and joy. It is a blessed and delightful task to do this; they are themes on which we love to dilate, and which sometimes fire our bosom and make our language glow. We *have* done this; we have done it often; yet with those who hear us, not a few, all these things avail nothing. You continue in your sins; you still pursue the paths of carnal security and worldliness; you will not repent and believe the Gospel, and come to Jesus Christ that you may have life. Communion season after communion season passes

away, years roll round, and you are ashamed of Christ. I can not change the truth of God into a lie; I may not be such a traitor to my Master nor to you; and well I know that, if I consent to be so, the blood of those who perish among you will be required at my hands.

Some of you have a deeper interest in the thoughts suggested in this discourse than you yourselves suppose. You live in a world full of the goodness of God, and where your temporal blessings and religious privileges are exerting perhaps an imperceptible, but powerful influence on your character. In no other world could you fill up the measure of your iniquity so fast, and in no other way can you crimson your damnation with so deep a die as by your abuse and perversion of *God's goodness*. You have here the opportunity of acting out what is in your heart, and of showing whether you choose death rather than life. You live and breathe amid mercies unceasingly bestowed, and filling your hearts with food and gladness, forgetful, it may be, that all these good things are exerting an influence on your character, and will all be *remembered* in eternity. They are the seeds that will be prolific in an immortal harvest of grateful or bitter memories, of joy or grief.

It may be that some of you have *all* your good things in this your lifetime. Is it so? Have

you made up your minds to take this world as your portion? Are you satisfied with this, and when at last you cry for mercy, will the only answer be, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst all thy good things?" Tell me, then, will you never awake until these days of mercy are gone by, and, like the rich man, have only to mourn that they will never return? Believe me, you will not always be thus prayerless; the rich man was not; but it was a bitter prayer that he offered, and it was too late. Sooner or later, all wicked men will pray; but it may be only when God shall say, "They shall call on me, but I will not answer."

Beloved hearers, "I beseech you by the mercies of God." I pray that "his *goodness* may lead you to repentance." Do not abuse it to your souls' undoing. See how kind God has been to you, and how kind he is still. See how he has nourished and brought you up as children, and no longer rebel against him. Do not violate these unspeakably tender obligations, and break these "cords of love," these "bands of a man." Look around you, and see how goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life; look up, and see that lovely, that loving, that adorable Being from which it flows—how worthy he is, and how wickedly you have offended him, and for once and truly smite upon your breast

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and say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Do not run away from him because you have offended him. This is a sad mistake, and shows how little you know of God. Rather run to him, and say, "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God, therefore shall the sons of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings!" Go to him in Jesus' name. Go to-day, and he will not cast you out. Go to-day, and you will have other things to look back upon in eternity besides lost and abused mercies. Go to-day, for you have no security of another Sabbath or another hour. God has a right to cut you down at any moment. Your soul is in jeopardy every breath. When you rise up, death may meet you before you lie down. When you go out, death may meet you on the highway, in the banqueting-hall, or in the mart of business, or in the forum of political excitement, or in the field of battle. When you lie down, death may creep beneath the folds of your softest slumbers, and you may exchange your pillow for the world where there is no rest day nor night—where there is not a drop of water to cool your tongue.

SERMON IX.

GOD THE GREATEST GIVER.

JAMES, i., 17.—*“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”*

WORLDS are from God. It is a magnificent creation we look at, because He is its wondrous author—a glad creation, because He is God over all, blessed forever—a beautiful creation, because lighted up and beautified by Him who is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, and a God doing wonders. Other sources of enjoyment there are, but He is the great Source; other givers there are, but He is the great Giver. The sun gives its light, the clouds their rain, the earth its fruits, and the sea its treasures; angels give; men are givers; yet, of all givers in the universe, God is the greatest—the Father of lights and of mercies, himself the source, the contriver, the dispenser of every “good gift and every perfect gift.”

The thought, therefore, which we desire to illustrate and impress in this discourse is, that God IS THE GREATEST OF GIVERS.

Yet we know not what eminence to occupy,

nor on what mountain-top to stand, from which we may survey the divine bounty. It is easy for us to perceive,

I. In the first place, that God is *the largest giver*.

His gifts comprise all the good which men or angels enjoy—"every good gift and every perfect gift; *life, and breath, and all things.*"

We know something of the vast sum of intellectual and immortal existences—of the natures with which God has endued them, and of their true and ultimate destiny. Sensation, perception, thought, memory, conscience, taste, imagination, stores of knowledge, converse with the past, inspection of the present, and a gratified insight into the future—what are these but magnificent, godlike gifts! Those warm affections which find a dwelling where all might have been gloomy, morose, and misanthropic, without the power of loving, and strangers to the happiness of being loved—what gifts are these! The endearment and promise which cluster around social life—the bland streams which flow through the abodes of parental tenderness and care, and filial duty and affection, and the nameless joys which make their home amid scenes sacred to friendship and love—whence are these?

Or if we look at the world so admirably fitted up and spread out for man's residence, and at the

manifold and wonderful adaptations of external nature to his wants, what vestiges are there here of designing, inventive goodness? The atmosphere is full of the elements of buoyancy and excitement—vital, vocal, fragrant. The earth not only sustains, but enriches, every where unbosoming its treasures, putting on sometimes its gorgeous and sometimes its simple livery, alternately to charm by its beauty, and by its sublimity and grandeur to fill with admiration. Traverse its mountains or its plains, penetrate into its forests or its mines, or linger about the seats of its dense population; go up its rivers, visit its islands, or pass over its oceans and continents, and at every step there are discoveries of the divine goodness which nothing can obscure, and which, the more they are perceived, are the more indicative of the great Giver.

Ignorance of this beautiful world is a calamity, because it shuts out these rich perceptions of the divine goodness. *Human knowledge* consists in an acquaintance with the works and ways of God. This is the great field of human inquiry—the appropriate field of natural, intellectual, and moral science. And the wider our range of vision, the more do we know of the largeness and extent of the divine bounty. Science was never so advanced in our world as at the present day, and never did it make such disclosures of God's good-

ness. The more extensive and the deeper our researches into the world of nature, or into the phenomena of vegetable or animal life, or the laws which govern mind, the more do we see of the goodness of God. The more familiar we become with astronomy, geography, history, the exact sciences, or morals and religion, the more extended are our experience and observation of his goodness. The soundest knowledge we possess, and the most lucid views, give the soundest and most lucid views of the goodness of God. These wondrous discoveries of human science are but wondrous discoveries of his goodness. If, with an eagle's eye, and from the highest attainments of science, you survey the surface or the interior of our globe; if you number the men that have dwelt upon it, or those who now dwell upon it; if you mark the discoveries they have made, and the improvements they have suggested, the enterprises in which they have been employed, and the successes which have stimulated and encouraged their efforts, what is so prominent in any or all of them as the divine goodness? Science has no laws but indicate his goodness; she has no language that speaks not of his goodness; she has no instruments, of telescopic, microscopic, or magnetic power, nor has nature any subtle agencies of light, heat, or electricity, that do not discover, and evolve, and announce

his goodness. The reason why human thought, by its utmost effort, and human science, by its utmost discoveries, often give rise to more inquiries than they set at rest, and, while they propose to "explain inexplicable phenomena, do, in that very explication, but add but one more to the mass of inexplicable facts," is that the extent of the divine goodness is so infinite that it perpetually recedes from the researches of men. We have no reason to believe there ever will be an end to these researches, for the obvious reason that there is no limit to the divine goodness. It literally "passeth knowledge."

Yet all these are but of the earth, earthy, and are all eclipsed by greater gifts bestowed on men as heirs of immortality. This Bible, these Sabbaths, these altars, this throne of grace, these exceeding great and precious truths and promises, that crown of righteousness that fadeth not away, that multitude that no man can number, gathered into his kingdom from every nation, and tribe, and tongue—these, too, are his gifts. And they are the greatest gifts that can be bestowed. The circumstances and the nature of men admit of their receiving none higher, none greater.

Of all these, God is the Giver. With what largeness of bounty are his favors bestowed! Who can comprehend them? "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God," says the

Psalmist; "how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand." Volume upon volume has been written to illustrate his bounty; but no human, no angelic mind or pen can adequately illustrate it. Were his gifts all recorded, the world itself could not contain the record. The world itself is that book. "It is a volume of an infinite number of leaves, and every leaf is full of meaning. It has been read by millions; it is read by millions now; but no created mind can grasp it. It will be read by saints and angels through the ages of eternity, but they will never reach the last leaf, nor fully comprehend the meaning of a single page."*

II. In the second place, God gives *more freely* than any other giver.

He has no scruple, no reserve in giving. On the one hand, he is under no impediment or hindrance, and, on the other, he is under no persuasion, no constraint or compulsion. He just gives spontaneously, gratuitously, without any stipulated consideration, and of his own free will. When the destroying angel was commissioned by God, as the punishment for David's numbering the people, to stretch out his hand upon Jerusalem, and was arrested at the threshing-floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, David proposed to *buy*

* Payson's "Select Thoughts."

the threshing-floor for the purpose of building an altar there unto the Lord, that the plague might be stayed. "And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him; behold, here be oxen for burnt-sacrifice, and threshing instruments, and other instruments of the oxen for wood. All things did Araunah, *as a king, give unto the king.*"

Many are the instances of splendid and royal bounty recorded on the pages of history; but their generosity is cold and tardy, reluctant and grudging, compared with God's. When we advert to them as illustrations of the generosity of the God of heaven and King of the universe, we do, as it were, but hold up a taper by the side of the sun. The freeness with which he gives does not admit of comparison. We can only say to the recipients of his bounty, as the Savior said to the twelve apostles, "*Freely ye have received.*" Men have no claim upon such bounty; they have no claim of merit, none of recompense. We know that it draws deep upon the pride of man to be thus the unworthy and unrecompensing receiver; but what is he more than this? what more than this will he ever be? "Who hath first given to the Lord, and it shall be given to him again? for of him, and to him, and through him are all things." He needs nothing, and men give him nothing. When he requires their sacrifices, he

at the same time demands. "Will *I* eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?" It is no favor they confer upon him when they serve him ever so devoutly. Their adorations do not make him wiser, or better, or happier; nor do their efforts make him more efficient; nor do their gold and silver make any additions to his treasury. "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise is profitable unto himself? Is it any gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" *Men* are enriched by his gifts, not *he* by theirs. Men are fallen by their iniquity. Justice would cut them off from the crumbs that fall from the table of his bounty. Justice, did it take its course, would poison the atmosphere, and seal up the stars, and obscure the sun. It would lock up the clouds, and their showers would refuse to descend. It would blight the trees, and they would remain barren; it would curse the earth, and it would refuse to bring forth food; it would turn these ten thousand comforts into sorrows, and convert the sources of human joy into fountains of wormwood and gall. We occupy a sinful world—probably more sinful than any other world. Even fallen angels have never sinned as men have sinned; they could not so sin, because they could not so offend the divine *goodness*. Yet it is at the feet of such offenders that this royal

bounty is thus freely poured. The most wicked share in it; he "maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good;" nations who "walk in their own ways" are refreshed by it; and, instead of overwhelming the earth on which they dwell with a flood of anger, he "fills their hearts with food and gladness."

God *does* good because he *is* good; this is the reason why he does it; and it is the strongest, the most imperative and impulsive reason. He gives without reluctance, because it is his nature to give. His goodness is like a fountain that is perpetually overflowing. He does not seek for *motives* to give except within his own giving mind; he seeks only *objects* on which his bounty may expand itself. Greatly is his goodness endeared, that it flows so freely, and courses this earth so cheerfully, and so generously gushes forth from his full, warm, and great heart. There is nothing reproachful or ungracious in his giving—nothing ill-timed, and nothing in the spirit with which he gives to detract from the value and enjoyment of his bounty. If men are made to feel their dependence upon him, it is no bitter and galling sense of their dependence; and if they are made to feel their unworthiness, it is but that sense of unworthiness that leads them the more gratefully and more joyfully to partake of his munificence. It is not with a scornful pride

that he gives, reproaching and upbraiding the objects of his bounty; nor is it with a grudging parsimony, that seems to dole out his gifts, as if with every scanty pittance he regretted the bounty. He gives "without upbraiding"—the freest and the most cheerful, as well as the largest giver in the universe.

III. In the third place, he is the *most constant and unwearied* giver.

The bounty of men is interrupted by other causes than the imperfect and failing sources from which it flows. They become "weary in well doing." Their kindness is fluctuating and inconstant; it is transient and ephemeral; and more especially is it intermitted where it is depreciated and abused, and brings no solid benefit to those on whom it is bestowed.

This is not the character of the divine Giver. There are no such inherent causes to interrupt the exercise of his pure and unmingled bounty. It never slumbers nor sleeps, and never falls into a state of insensibility or negligence. Nor are there any external obstacles to the expression of his munificence which he can not and does not surmount. He sees no good to be done which is out of his power to do, and no evil to be removed which is out of his power to remove. Even though men pervert and abuse his goodness—though they remain insensible to its claims upon

their gratitude—though there are so many who become neither the wiser, the better, nor the happier for all he bestows, and many a time provoke him to withdraw and withhold it, still it is unwearied; it waits; it is long-suffering goodness. There is a world of abuse against God in the hearts of men and on their lips. There is great contempt and abuse even of his goodness—base and disingenuous contempt—a contempt for which God rebukes and upbraids men more than for any other sin; but, for all this, the hand of his bounty is stretched out still. Its endurance and its constancy under abuse is one of its prominent and most endearing features. It takes not the first occasions of provocation: “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence.” He does not intermit his gifts for a day, an hour, a moment. They follow men from infancy to childhood, to middle life, to old age. So constant and unwearied are they, that they are calculated on; men have found it safe and gainful to calculate on them. All their arrangements of business and pleasure are made upon the conceded principle that they will not be interrupted. They can afford to *underwrite* against this interruption at a very small premium. It is no great risk to insure life or property against casualties and misfortune, because the doctrine of chances is found by experience to be all in favor of God’s good-

ness. And what a high, though undesigned encomium is this single fact on the constancy of his care and bounty! Bounty is the rule, casualty is the exception.

And thus his goodness continues from age to age. Centuries of time—centuries multiplied upon centuries, ever since the morning of the creation, have been employed by the beneficent Creator in dispensing his bounty. Though the wants of men are as numerous as the moments of their existence, and though the inheritance of their poverty has been transmitted to every succeeding generation from the fall of the first man to the present hour, the current of the divine goodness flows on unimpeded. It is never merged in the waves of time. Onward it goes, bearing onward, from millennium to millennium, health, fertility, and gladness. The voice of ages proclaims that, while creatures want, from the young lion and the raven when they cry, to man in his more multiplied and urgent necessities, the Lord's ear is not heavy that it can not hear, nor his arm shortened that it can not save. So long as God exists, he will be good; so long as he exists, he will give, because he is the "Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." His goodness is not measured by the date of years; it endureth forever; it is from everlasting to everlasting.

IV. In the fourth place, they are the *most costly* gifts which this great Giver bestows.

The King of Israel once said, "I will not offer that to the Lord my God which cost me nothing." Men appreciate gifts by what they cost, and they appreciate the giver by the watchfulness and toil, the self-denial and suffering, and self-sacrificing spirit which are the price of his bounty.

It costs God nothing to give to angels. Their bright crowns drop from his hand, and from his heart the fullness of their joy. His gifts visit them without obstruction, and unimpeded by any superior and opposing claims.

To men he can not give thus. Time was when there was a restraint upon his bounty. The gifts were impeded by the claims of law and justice; nor might sovereign omnipotence break the bonds by which his goodness was thus manacled. Justice had claims on men as *sinner*s, and God is the friend of justice. His law had been violated, outraged, and there was no room for the movement of goodness. These high and holy claims of justice were such as could not be set aside by any arbitrary edict of the dispensing power. They must be cared for, adjusted, canceled. Nor could this be done except by a completed and accepted expiation for the sinner's offenses—an expiation so mighty as to satisfy divine justice.

There was no other way of removing the obstruction so fatal to the natural and outflowing course of the divine bounty. It is costly bounty, and now flows at the price of suffering and untold agonies, God's own and only Son assuming our nature, and bearing our sins in his own body on the tree. It is the price of this goodness that gives such emphasis to its preciousness. Its streams must flow, though conveyed by a channel opened by atoning blood. It is this "unspeakable gift" that gives emphasis to every other gift his hand bestows. All the gifts of God, of every form, which have been showered upon the earth since man's apostasy, and which are now descending upon it in such profusion and resplendency, are conveyed through this costly medium. In the order of nature, the first and parent gift was this purchased warrant—this high guaranty for all his subsequent bounty—this public justification of his "gifts to the rebellious," free now, with the full consent, nay, the full lustre of his attributes, to expatiate in all their variety and richness over this sinful creation. As it is written, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also, *with him*, freely give us all things?" Wonderful goodness! "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," and shining forth, a just God and a Savior, in the face of Je-

sus Christ. No marvel that, at the early expressions of this goodness, the "morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," and that, with every progressive disclosure of it, the angels desire to look into these things. Oh, it was a mysterious movement that the Son of God should thus descend upon our world to suffer and die, and sink under a burden which must have overwhelmed guilty millions, in order to level the barrier between the goodness of God and the violators of his holy law! Yes, they are costly gifts. Streams of bounty, rivers of mercy flow over this otherwise arid and burning world; but they are all to be traced up to this fountain-head—this great moral reservoir which is for the healing of the nations.

There is an additional thought which gives force to all the preceding suggestions. It is,

V. In the fifth place, the fact that the *great Giver himself bestows the state of mind which alone prepares and qualifies men for the enjoyment of his bounty.*

Man's apostasy constituted a new era in the history of the universe. It called for a marvelous interposition of infinite wisdom and love for arresting the progress of this revolt, and turning it to good account. It was the devil's stratagem to obstruct the river of life, and lock up the resources of the divine goodness from a fallen race.

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But his stratagems were defeated. The Son of God, as we have just seen, came to destroy the works of the devil, and to make this earth the theatre where the best and richest gifts of heaven were to be dispensed in their selectest forms.

Yet even his coming and his sacrifice availed nothing so long as the children of men remain blind to his glories, and their reluctant hearts turned away from his offered goodness and mercy, and the best of all his favors were little thought of and universally rejected. And had there not been a redeeming Spirit in the upper sanctuary whose object was to raise this apostate earth to more than its primeval loveliness, and to manifest the divine goodness toward it in new and unheard-of ways, upon a new and unheard-of scale, and every where unfolding the mighty power as well as the mighty love of God, all these gifts would have been in vain.

The work of Christ reveals *an agency* which is equal to this high attainment, not only by its propitiating power, but by its power upon the reluctant heart of man. The human mind and heart constitute the sphere of his operations and the field of his conquests. His power and his victories lie in the ascendancy he possesses over the understanding, the conscience, and the heart. The office-work of the Holy Spirit is the great offset and security against the temptations and

agency of the subtle and malignant adversary. "Thy people shall be *willing* in the day of thy power." The crowning act of the divine goodness is to *make men willing to accept and enjoy it*. When the reluctant and rebellious heart refuses and rejects his mercy, he takes that rebel heart away, and subdues it by his mighty power.

We hold this to be an exceedingly precious truth, and it gives the touch of an effective and overruling control over all those powers of darkness that would neutralize and annul the divine goodness. It is a mournful proof of human infatuation that there are those who reject the divine goodness and mercy. Yet such is the human heart. Man—oh, how fallen, how degraded is man, that he should not only be his own destroyer, but refuse the grace by which alone he can be restored to the divine favor! Of all the beings in the universe, men alone are unwilling to receive the gifts of God with a prompt and cheerful gratitude. Angels receive them gladly, nay, the very brutes are joyful recipients of them; while proud man, in his haughty self-dependence, makes light of them. To the most affecting exhibitions of the divine goodness the world has ever beheld, and to its most ravishing glories, he turns a jealous and unfriendly eye. Yet, "hear, oh heavens, and be joyful, oh earth," in the plenitude of his goodness, God takes away

this heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh. He draws the soul by cords of love. He wins it to his embraces. He gains its affections. And, by tender care and watchful kindness, what he thus gains he keeps, and as the apple of his eye. And when, on the borders of the heavenly land, those who have been thus purchased and thus won shall see *how* they have been won and kept, they will begin to appreciate the gifts his hand bestows. And when the cross of Christ shall multiply its attractions, and the power and love of the Spirit shall become more and still more manifest; when these dark nights and this cold winter of earth shall pass away, and the Sun of righteousness shall arise on a thousand lands, and the light of salvation shall expand and lay itself over all the habitations of men, the eternal source of all these mercies—so rich and varied, bestowed so freely, dispensed with such unwearied constancy, so studied and so costly—will be every where acknowledged *as the greatest of Givers*—the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Oh, beloved hearers, what a God is this who thus makes himself known to us! How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! Well may he say, "I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness on the earth; for in this do I delight, saith the Lord." What should so interest us as

to acquaint ourselves with God? Why should we look so much at other and meaner things, and so seldom lift our thoughts to *him*? One ray of light from this uncreated source scatters a thousand clouds. This universal cry of want—of hunger for the bread which cometh down from heaven—of thirst for the waters of life—of the burdened conscience under the agonies of remorse—of a conscious immortality under the dreary forebodings of an unprovided hereafter—there is no relief from this universal craving of the soul until she makes the living God her refuge and her portion. This he counsels you to do, and asks you if the offered friendship of such a Being is to be any longer rejected? He makes this one request of you all—himself, the greatest Giver, asks one gift from you all, “My son, give me thy heart.” He who waits to be gracious—he who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance—he who swears by himself that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and has been so long beseeching you to become reconciled to him, makes to-day a renewed demand upon your affection and confidence. Shall not his goodness lead you to repentance? Oh, look up and see who it was that first drew you into life, who it is that has nourished you in his bosom, and has brought you up as a child. Look back and see how, when you were bent on

folly, he bore with you—how, when you wandered far from him, he waited for your return—how, when you abused his goodness, he forbore to swear that you should not enter into his rest. Look around you, and see if you can count his gifts, and if the meanest of them does not entitle him to your love—yes, the meanest of them; and if the meanest, how strong the title of the greatest—the *one unspeakable gift*, itself wrapping up and dispensing the rich and varied bounty of his unchanging love? It is this gift of his Son that gilds this dark world with so much light and love—that brings with it these tranquil Sabbaths and these precious hopes—that makes the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice—that makes life a blessing and immortality joy. From his throne that exalted One is looking down on this revolted world to-day, and is looking after us to admit us to the privileges of his children.

We urge these invitations of heavenly mercy on this, the sixth decade of this nineteenth century, with solemnity and with hope. The next ten years the world will be wiser than it is now. If the reckoning of thinking men may be relied on, the year 1866 will be the beginning of memorable days to our poor earth, and years of the right hand of the Most High. And the dawning has begun. We enter to-day on the first year of the

decade, and I hail it with thankfulness and hope. The past year is gone, and millions with it; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. We have lived to begin another year, and let us begin it wisely. To some of you the year 1859 will never be forgotten. It is the year when some of your hopes were blighted, and the record is entered upon your memory, not soon to be erased. It is the year which will not be forgotten by us as a people, and the record of God's mercy to us in this house of prayer is before your eyes. It is the year when some of you sought and found the Savior of men, and the record of his grace is inscribed on the tablet of your thankful hearts. It is the year when some of you have heard and rejected the great salvation, and now, at the close of it, you must say, "The harvest is past." There will be great changes during the year 1860—in individuals, in families, in churches, in the land, in the world. Oh, be ye ready, dear hearers, for these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. When will ye be *wise*? I will say no more, but commend you all to God's blessing, and devoutly, my beloved people, *wish you all a happy new year!*

SERMON X.

WEALTH A SNARE TO THE SOUL.

MARK, I., 23 — "*How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!*"

THIS is not one of the maxims of the world. Who does not perceive that these words would never have been uttered except by a teacher sent from God? It required no small degree of moral courage to utter them. If we were to affirm that the rich men in this assembly were more likely to perish than those who are not rich, it might be deemed an unseasonable, if not an extraordinary remark. Yet, if we mistake not, this is the spirit of the truth which is here recorded. It was uttered by the great Teacher to his disciples in observing the conduct of a rich young man who had a very good opinion of his own piety, and who professed his willingness to do whatever was required of him in order to inherit eternal life. With the view of bringing his sincerity to the test, the Savior required him "to *sell* whatsoever he had, and give to the poor." He had many excellences; he was an amiable and moral young man; but the Savior desired to show him

that there were other things which he loved more than God, and that this was the great defect in his character. The test was a severe and searching one. He could not abide it. "He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, because *he had great possessions.*" If he had not been so rich a man, he would not have been so embarrassed by this exacting demand. His wealth ensnared him; he could not part with his wealth—no, not even for Christ and heaven. Jesus saw it. He felt that riches are a snare to the soul. He looked round about, and said to his disciples, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"

This is the truth we wish to illustrate and enforce. But before doing this, we would give emphasis to one preliminary remark. Wealth forms no insurmountable obstacle to the possession of piety. If there were nothing to obstruct the salvation of the rich except their affluence, they might be saved as easily as other men. There are not wanting splendid examples of piety among the rich. Abraham and Job were rich. David, and Solomon, and Joseph of Arimathea were men of princely fortune. And so were Howard, and Reynolds, and Lady Huntingdon, and Lady Argyle. And so were Phillips, and Norris, and Abbot, and Boudinot, and Ralston, and Henry, and Rutgers. But they were men of piety. And

so are there living men and living women, not a few, who, in defiance of the snares of wealth, present honorable examples of Christian piety. Wealth is the gift of God, and, when enjoyed and used aright, is a distinguished blessing. It may and ought to lead those who possess it the nearer to the great Giver, instead of alluring them far from him. But, while it is no impossible thing for rich men to be Christians, there are, at the same time, serious difficulties in the way of their becoming so, and obstacles to their salvation which require great watchfulness and effort to surmount.

I. The first of these is what the Scriptures call
THE PRIDE OF LIFE.

The Bible speaks of this as one of the three powerful causes of man's destruction—the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and *the pride of life*." We are instructed that "the wicked, through *the pride of his countenance*, will not seek after God." It is recorded among the Proverbs of Israel that "*pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*." They were days of her splendor when God uttered the premonition to Jerusalem, "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, *pride and fullness of bread*." It was an affecting view of the exposure of men from this source that extorted that burst of compassion from the lips of the prophet,

"If ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your *pride*, and mine eyes shall weep and run down with tears." Pride is the eminence from which men more usually plunge into the fatal abyss, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castest them down into destruction." An inordinate and unreasonable self-esteem excludes God from the heart. It is so opposed to the Gospel that it is one of the great obstacles to be surmounted in accepting it. A lofty and proud spirit can not stoop to so humiliating a salvation. It stains the pride of all human glory. It is not fame that a man is seeking when he becomes a Christian. Nor is it for the sake of being esteemed superior to his fellow-men—nor is it for aggrandizing in any way his own little self. The pride of life is not of the Father, but of the world. The prominent feature of Christianity is that expressed by Paul when he says, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Christianity attains its object when it most humbles the pride of man, so that "no flesh shall glory in his presence;" but "he that glorieth glorieth in the Lord."

It is no slander of the rich to say that there is much in their condition to foster and cherish the pride of the human heart. The poor may be as proud as the rich; but, if they are so, it is not be-

cause there is any thing in their condition to inflate their self-esteem. And where the rich are as humble as the poor, it is because the natural propensities of their hearts are more subdued. It is a more difficult thing for the rich than for the poor to say, "What things were gain to me, those I count loss for Christ." The facility with which the desires of the rich are gratified, the obsequiousness of their fellow-men, the forms of splendor and luxury that are adapted to their station, the very embellishments and decorations of wealth—its dignity, its honor, its exaltation, its influence—are allurements which it is very difficult for the human heart to resist simply for the sake of truth and duty. Men are slow to take the yoke of Christ upon them from their disinclination to piety; and, when there is the superadded resistance of wealth, the fear is that they will never take up the cross. When a rich man turns his thoughts to the concerns of eternity and the soul, he has to struggle with this difficulty, and not unfrequently it depresses and discourages him. A poor man may feel that it is wondrous mercy for the God of heaven to stoop to such a sinner as he. It is not so apt to be so with the rich. "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men, therefore pride compasseth them about as with a chain." The whole bent of such a man's mind must be changed,

and he must be influenced by views and motives of which he has hitherto had no conception, before he becomes a Christian. It is cause for thankfulness that Christians who are now rich became Christians before wealth ensnared them. With all their present love of Christ, they often find that it now ensnares them, and obscures many a bright view of the heavenly glory; and "if these things are done in the green tree, what would have been done in the dry?" This "pride of life" is very apt to gain the supremacy, to become the reigning and resistless motive by which the rich are actuated, and to enstamp upon them a strength and habit of thought and feeling as inaccessible to the claims of piety as it is accessible to the proud heart.

Intimately connected with this remark, there is,

II. A second thought. It is no trifling obstacle to the salvation of the rich that *they have strong impressions of their personal independence.*

There is nothing in which apostate man more glories than the fancied exemption from obligation and control. Men do not naturally love and enjoy the thought that they are dependent either upon God or one another. It is the Christian mind only that sees and enjoys God in every thing, that marks his hand every where,

and that prompts the grateful and habitual acknowledgment, "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God; how great is the sum of them!" Poor, worthless, and self-ruined sinner as he is, the natural spirit of man is a spirit of self-sufficiency; as he surveys his possessions and enjoyments, he is wont to feel that his own arm has gotten him these things. Where there is nothing to hold this sentiment in check in his outward condition, it were no marvel if it gain a strong ascendancy. Great wealth is very apt to foster this unseemly self-reliance, and, in the end, to breed a haughty contempt of God. At every step of his progress from want to competency, from competency to affluence, he treads more boldly, and feels that he has a firmer footing on the earth. He asks neither God nor man what his course shall be, and "fears not God nor regards man." He does not so readily call to mind who it is in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being, nor by whom he is thus cared for, and whence is the supply of his every want from year to year, from hour to hour, and from moment to moment. He is a stranger to all trust in God, but trusts rather in the multitude of his riches. He says to the gold, thou art my hope, and to the fine gold, thou art my confidence. His heart is turned away from God, because he does not feel that he has any need of looking to him. It

is not he who prays, "Give us this day our daily bread;" his language rather is, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years!" And thus his wealth is his snare. It is to his own resources he repairs, and not to God. And who does not perceive that it is hard for such a man to enter into the kingdom of God? To whatever extent this spirit governs him, it is adverse to the spirit of the Gospel. In nothing is the grace of God more triumphant than in the subjugation of this spirit. None are under greater temptations to withhold their hearts from God than those who have all which this world can give. It was from the eminence of his wealth and grandeur that Pharaoh demanded, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" God once said to his ancient people, "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, and thou saidst, I will not hear: this has been thy manner from thy youth." When God thus gives men their requests, the result too often shows that he sends leanness into their souls. It is the most natural thing in the world for a man who is rapidly accumulating wealth; who is bent on adding to his territory that which is next his own; who rolls in splendor, is clothed in fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day, to live without thinking of God. The eternal God is not his refuge; his wealth is his strong city. He leans on earth. He maketh flesh his arm.

The tide of worldly prosperity sets in with the strong current of his native alienation to God and holiness; and, unless a miracle of mercy prevent, sweeps him away. With what appalling obstacles must such a man contend, if he would come down to the conscious dependence of a little child upon the constant visitations of his Father who is in heaven. How reluctantly is he induced to give God the first place in his heart, and to regard him as standing in the place of his wealth. What overwhelming difficulties must be removed if he would avert the intensity of his thoughts, the ardor of his affections, the strength of his confidence from his possessions, and place his best affections, and all his safety and sufficiency, in God alone.

III. A third difficulty in the way of the salvation of the rich is *their attachment to the world*.

Eternity alone will reveal how many more of our deluded race would have entered into the kingdom of heaven if they could but have been persuaded to give up the world. Great multitudes, like the rich young man to whom reference is had in the text, have been awakened to deep and solemn thought—have inquired of their religious teachers what they should do to be saved—have resolved to break off their iniquity by righteousness and their transgressions by turning to God—have become almost Christians—who,

when they have understood that the condition of discipleship is a hearty renunciation of the world, have come to the sad conclusion to choose this world as their portion. They have gone away from Christ, and would not come to him that they might have life, "because they had great possessions." They were "bound to destruction in fetters of gold."

There never was a more obvious truth uttered than that "covetousness is idolatry;" and never was truth more withering to the hopes of supremely worldly men. There is no room in the heart for God where it is fully preoccupied by the world. The love, the worship, and the service of God are excluded by the love, and worship, and service of another. The loyalty which belongs to God is pledged and given to another sovereign. "No man can serve two *masters*; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye can not serve God and mammon." It is impossible to give this world and God the same equal attachment. No man can be devoted to them both with the same ardor and faithfulness. There must be a secret preference; so that, if the world has the ascendancy, the love of God is not there.

And is it necessary to affirm that, of all the men who are most exposed to the ascendancy of
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this worldly spirit, they are *the men of wealth?* Their industry and enterprise, their economy and contrivance, their successes and their gains, much as they do them honor, expose them to an all-grasping spirit. Grace not only can, but does conquer this love of gold. But if it is true that, the more men possess, the more greedy are they to accumulate, how true is it that the rich are under almost resistless inducements to idolize their possessions. Oh, it is this spirit that ensnares the soul. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" They have mountains of difficulty to struggle with. Thought, time, effort, talent, zeal, are all concentrated in the pursuit of the world, and where is the prospect of their ever becoming Christians? When our Lord addressed this consideration to his disciples, they felt the force of it and exclaimed, "Who, then, can be saved?" Alas! there is little hope for those who are thus wedded to the world. It is to be feared they will exclaim, as many a man of wealth has exclaimed on the bed of death, *The world, the world has ruined me!* Many a time have we watched the progress of men toward the close of their brilliant and honorable career of worldly prosperity with an aching heart. Nor is there any relief from a more calm and deliberate review. "Verily, I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the

eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." This whole movement is opposed to piety. It is an *up-hill* effort for a rich man at every step. It is a war with the world without and the world within. Men may make light of it, and think that it is a work which may be done at any time. Preachers there may be who tell you that it is an easy thing; but, believe me, when you are once awake to it, and set about it in earnest, you will find it is no easy thing to give up the world.

IV. We remark, in the fourth place, *the cares and perplexities of the rich constitute another difficulty in the way of their salvation.*

I have heard men of moderate expectations say more than once that great wealth is not worth the care, and toil, and perplexity it costs. Nor were they men of piety that made the remark, but professedly men of the world. And if the men of the world have such views of the cost of wealth, how wide a space may this thought well occupy in its bearings upon their spiritual and eternal interests. Their worldly interests are the common plea of the young for their neglect of religion, and they also form the excuse of those more advanced in years. What minister of the Gospel is not familiar with the mournful fact that not a few of those committed to his charge, and who seemed to be not far from the kingdom of

God, have been led to drop the subject of religion from their thoughts from the mere pressure of worldly care. This was the case with that large class of hearers referred to in the parable of the sower. The seed appeared to take root for a short season, but when the thorny cares of the world sprang up, they overpowered and choked the word, and it became unfruitful. May we not safely say that wherever is found the greatest amount of secular care and solicitude, there is the greatest danger to the soul? The thoughts are so busied about other concerns, the attention so wearied, the vigor of body and mind so exhausted, and the whole being so immersed in secular and sometimes harassing vocations, that there is little opportunity to hear, or read, or converse, or even *think* about spiritual and eternal things. The man has enough to do to take care of his alternately accumulating and diminishing treasures. In the incessant pressure of such claims, no place is found for the claims of God and eternity, and the soul is lost!

This pressure ordinarily falls upon two classes of men, the rich and the poor; but more especially the *rich*. The poor feel it from the urgency of their wants, the rich from their abundance. The rich, with few exceptions, are men of forethought, men of wakeful and business habits and enterprise. From a sort of necessity, they are al-

most always preoccupied in concerns that are remote from God and heaven. Such are their social relations, more especially in large cities, that even the few hours of relaxation that are allowed them are not only an encroachment upon their repose, but an unwelcome toil. Amid these constant efforts to accumulate, protect, and enjoy what God has given them, what marvel if the soul becomes a secondary and subordinate concern, or no concern at all? Lord Bacon, overshadowed as his last years were, and possessing a mind rarely equaled, has the following remarks on the influence of riches: "I can not call riches better than the baggage of virtue. As the baggage is to an army, so are riches to virtue. It can not be spared nor left behind, but it hindereth the march; yea, and the care of it sometimes loseth or disturbeth the victory. Great riches have sold more men than they have bought out." It is no easy matter to break through the force of such habits as these, to bid away from the mind such care and perplexity, and with steadfastness of purpose and singleness of heart bring an undivided solicitude to the great business of religion. How many a man, impressed for the moment with the worth of the soul, and soberly contrasting it with his coffers of gold, has secretly confessed, in the bitterness of his heart, that the treasures he fondly hoped would smooth his

path have left him not an hour of sweet tranquillity, and are only piercing him through with many sorrows! When, in view of such exposures, the disciples exclaimed, "Who, then, can be saved?" their Master replied, "With men it is impossible, but all things are possible with God." Yes, "all things are possible with God." He can give their wealth to the winds, the waves, the flames, the drought, or to fraud and wickedness, or to their own extravagance and folly. And he can touch other springs of grief and disappointment within their bosoms that shall render it worthless. Yet, to human view, the chances are all against such a man's salvation. "How hardly shall he that has riches enter into the kingdom of God!"

V. We must add, in the fifth place, that *the best means of grace are not ordinarily employed on behalf of the rich.*

Men are not saved without the appointed means of salvation. "I have begotten you," says Paul, "through the Gospel." It is a law of the divine kingdom that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." If there is any class of men who, from their condition in society, are separated from the appointed means of salvation, their doom is written in the sentence, "Where no vision is, the people perish."

It is not reproachfully that we speak it when we say that rich men, as a class, put themselves at a distance from the means of grace and salvation. You do not find the rich so generally acquainted with the Bible as those who enjoy a mere competency. If a poor man, or a poor family, or a poor neighborhood, is destitute of the Scriptures, Christian benevolence seeks them out and supplies their wants; but who gives Bibles to the rich? or who distributes religious tracts to the rich? If the poor are uninstructed in religion, they are brought into the Sabbath school; but who searches out the children of the rich in order to teach them the way of life? If the poor and men in moderate circumstances are destitute of a preached Gospel, they will be very apt to be furnished with an evangelical ministry; but what man, or society of men, takes the same interest in behalf of the destitute rich?

Where the institutions of religion are statedly enjoyed, it is also a lamentable fact that they are neglected more by the rich than by any other class, except the abject poor. Who absent themselves from the sanctuary, or are found in their places only at the morning service, if not the rich, and those who are born and brought up amid wealth and fashion? I have often observed, too, and with pain, that those who have been greatly prospered in business, and risen from

straitened circumstances to affluence, more generally, if they have not become pious men, evince an increasing disregard of religious institutions as their wealth increases.

Nor do the rich generally attend upon the most faithful ministrations of the Gospel. There is a great difference in the instructions of the sanctuary as presented by different religious teachers. By some the Gospel is exhibited in its purity and simplicity, in self-denying, heart-searching, and soul-humbling as well as comforting power; by others it is exhibited as quite an accommodating concern, which troubles no man's conscience, and disturbs no man's idolatry of the world. From such pulpits it reads more moral lessons than Gospel truths; it is a learned Gospel, a rhetorical Gospel, an eloquent Gospel, an ornate and pretty Gospel, rather than a well-arranged, full-orbed, solemn, and effective Gospel. Its object is to gratify the hearers rather than please God, to please men rather than save them. It is not necessary to inquire which of these kinds of preaching is the best means of grace and salvation. But we may take leave to ask, On which do the gay, and the fashionable, and the wealthy more generally give their attendance? In the days of the Savior, "the *common people* heard him gladly;" but did "any of the rulers or the Pharisees believe on him?" So it has been, with

honorable exceptions, ever since. And so it is now. "To the poor the Gospel is preached." "The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it." The court religion and the court ministry are very apt to fall short of the Bible standard. A fashionable church is but another name for a smooth Gospel.

Nor does the exposure end here. For myself, I must say that, during a prolonged ministry, with few exceptions, I have not found the rich giving their countenance to the weekly lecture and prayer-meeting. I look upon these services as essential to a spiritual Church. Every minister needs them; his own intellect, and heart, and habits need them. And every congregation needs them; and every hearer needs them who would be a true, and growing, and useful Christian. But rarely are the rich found there; they do not seem to feel that it is the place for them. And how rarely are they seen in those humble dwellings where the Spirit of God so often meets the "two or three" that are gathered together in his name. When are they seen at a meeting of the anxious? How hard is it to bring a rich man even to a private interview with his minister at those seasons when the Spirit of God strives with all, both rich and poor? He is ashamed of Christ—ashamed to be thought anxious for his soul, and "goes away mourning,"

and keeps away. And, while men who are less entangled with the world cherish the strivings of God's Spirit, this poor rich man grieves him away, and goes down to hell.

Nor is this all. When ministers are most awake to the responsibility of their office, and most in earnest for the salvation of their people, and testify the grace of God publicly and from house to house, whose door are they likely to pass? The door of poverty? No. Their humble abode greets him with a smile. The door of competency? No. This is the circle in which he himself moves, where he feels at home, and where he looks for no forbidding frown or reserve, and where, if he does meet them, he knows best how to meet them. No; it is that sumptuous dwelling—it is that pile of marble, where he puts his hand upon the bell, and his courage misgives him, and, like a coward, goes away, and waits for a more convenient season. He can not conquer the secret apprehension that no such errand of mercy as that which guides his steps will be welcome there. And, though he may often have been their guest, and be under obligations to their bounty, and may reproach himself for his criminal unfaithfulness, he fails to deliver his message. He can reprove, rebuke, and exhort the poor, but the melancholy fact remains that he deals not thus faithfully and thus personally ,

with the more affluent of his charge. Even in these few personal interviews with them on which he ventures, he is under strong inducements to "daub with untempered mortar," to dispense premature consolation, to say peace where God says there is no peace, and to make hypocrites of the rich, while, through the grace of God, he makes converts of the poor. And the same unfaithfulness distinguishes the intercourse of private Christians with the rich. There is no alarm, no embarrassment in their religious conversation with the poor; but in the presence of the rich their tongue is palsied. They can not speak a word for Christ. The rich may not share in such a repast. No; there is little love to the souls of the rich. Bibles there are, and tracts there are, and ministers, and pastoral faithfulness, and prayers, and tender and solemn instructions in a thousand forms for the poor, but the *poor rich* must remain unadmonished, and go unpitied to their own place. Scarcely any class of men in Christian congregations are so destitute of so many of the best means of grace and salvation. "How hardly shall they that HAVE *riches* enter into the kingdom of God!"

My beloved hearers, you *need not envy the rich*. This was David's sin, when "he was envious at the foolish," because he "saw the prosperity of the wicked." God's sanctuary cured him of his

error, because he there "understood their end." Why should you envy a man that which ensnares his soul, and throws such mountain obstacles in his way to heaven? I have never dared to pray for wealth, either for myself or my children. It is much more likely to injure and destroy both old and young, than either are likely to use it well, and devote it to such purposes as God approves.

Take heed, also, *lest your solicitude to heap up riches prove ruinous to your eternal interests.* This is the danger of this money-loving and money-making people. You may seek wealth, but it is no impossible thing to seek it to idolatry. This anxiety, and watchfulness, and effort, what doth it profit? If you gain your object, will it not be to make it your god? and if so, must it not be at the loss of your soul? God has said, "They that *will be rich* fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." And will you, then, strive to be rich? God has said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." And will you strive to be rich? Rather say with one of old, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and

steal, and take the name of my God in vain." It may be in great mercy that he frowns upon your worldly prospects. He would have you ambitious of heavenly treasures, and set your affections on things that are above. To you who are young he says with paternal solicitude, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Wait not till wealth ensnares you. To all he says, "Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life eternal."

Our subject, also, *affectionately addresses itself to the rich*. Let the rich men of piety reflect often upon their obligations to the grace of God, and upon the wonders that grace has achieved in breaking down the barriers which even affluence throws in its way, and in plucking them from the scorching flames. "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Take heed lest your wealth lead you to depart from the Lord your God. Use this world as not abusing it, for "the fashion of it passeth away." You are God's stewards, and must soon give an account of your stewardship. How fitting the injunction to the sacred ministry, "*Charge them* that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." "*Charge them* that they do good, that they *be rich in good works*, ready to

distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

To the rich who are not pious, let me say, with concern, My respected friends, every thing is leagued against you, and there is fearful reason to apprehend that you will not enter the kingdom of God. But tell me, Will you perish because God is kind? Shall not his goodness lead you to repentance? Will you fill up the measure of your iniquity because he thus fills your cup of earthly joy? What a mournful and humbling view of the human heart is this! And what an affecting view of its folly! The waves of time are sweeping you onward to eternity, yet are you greedily catching at the spray they dash over you. It is all "vanity and vexation of spirit," yet are you expecting from it what can be found in God alone. It is polluting your own souls, and jeopardizing your salvation, yet are you "seeking the living among the dead." What doth it profit? Ay, "what doth it profit a man if he gain the *whole world* and lose his own soul?"

Finally, let those who are seeking a competent portion of the good things of this life do so in the fear of God. We are no advocates of idle habits or a slothful spirit. Such habits and such a spirit are the bane of goodness. "Be diligent

in business" is the divine command. But this is not all the precept. "Be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, *serving the Lord*." We say to you, therefore, pursue your worldly concerns upon principles sanctioned by the Word of God, and enforced by your immortal destiny. We counsel the young men of this congregation to engage in their secular enterprises with integrity and diligence, but to see to it that they aim at and attain more unwasting treasures than this world can give. No matter how industrious you are if the fear of God is before your eyes; if you acknowledge him in all your ways, that he may direct your paths; if you seek his favor for all you need, and crave his blessing on all you enjoy. This spirit of dependence upon him, and thankfulness to him, will keep your desires for wealth within the limits of Christian wisdom, and insure to you his blessing. His blessing maketh rich and addeth no sorrow. His blessing with competency, nay, even with poverty, is more to be desired than riches with his frown. "His favor is life; his loving-kindness is better than life." And I repeat the thought, seek and secure these *before you become rich*, for "how hardly shall they that *have* riches enter the kingdom of God!"

SERMON XI.

HONEST AND EARNEST SEEKING.

JEREMIAH, XXIX., 13, 14.—“*And ye shall seek me, and find me when ye shall search for me with all your hearts, and I will be found of you, saith the Lord.*”

CONSCIENCE forebodes evil to the guilty. They are suspicious—suspicious of themselves, *because* they are guilty. But above all are they suspicious of that omniscient eye that runs to and fro throughout the earth, that sees through all disguises, that penetrates the secrets of the heart, and so ordains and so governs all things that, sooner or later, “their sin will find them out.” We say not there is no good ground for these suspicions, but we do say that the spirit of our text is enough to inspire the wickedest man in the world with hope. Ancient Israel had proved recreant to their rightful sovereign. They had become idolaters, and familiar with all the polluting and bloody crimes inseparable from the worship of idol gods. True to himself, the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth was angry with his people, and exiled them to a bitter captivity. They had little sympathy from earth, and scarcely

looked for sympathy from heaven. Yet God's object with that revolting people was to win them back to himself, and bring them to a renewed, and holy, and happy subjection. They are touching words in the paragraph which contains the passage on which I propose to address you. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord—*thoughts of peace, and not of evil*, to give you an expected end. Then ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. *And ye shall seek me, and find me when ye search for me with all your heart.*"

Two great principles in the economy of the Gospel are here brought to our consideration. The first is, that, in dealing with our world as a fallen and apostate world, the God of heaven proclaims himself propitious, and to be sought unto by the children of men. The second is that they shall find him when they search for him with all their heart. It concerns us well to understand,

I. In the first place, that, in dealing with our world as a fallen world, THE GOD OF HEAVEN PROCLAIMS HIMSELF PROPITIOUS, AND TO BE SOUGHT UNTO BY THE CHILDREN OF MEN.

He was not bound to such a procedure by law and justice. The character of men was that of rebels; they had forfeited the divine favor, and

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had no cause of complaint, though doomed to death. Yet, instead of maintaining a government of pure law and justice, the great Lawgiver has seen fit, of his own good pleasure, to administer the government of our lost world by the hands of a Mediator. The great mission of the Son of God had for its object the vindication of the divine righteousness in the pardon and salvation of the condemned and lost. This was the selected procedure of Infinite Wisdom for winning back the wayward spirits of the rebellious, and once more and forever restoring them to his own holy family. The conviction of their undone estate is accompanied by such overtures of the divine mercy as keeps them from despair. Despair is sullen; it is impenetrable and hard-hearted; it is cloudy and dark; it is reckless of consequences, and seeks, rather than shuns, the ways of death. If man's nature is ever recovered to its pristine purity and love, its original honor and joy, the desponding heart must be cheered by hope. Despair never repents, never prays, never wears the lovely features of that Gospel which announces glad tidings of great joy. While this Gospel is "full of truth," it is also "full of grace." It is not obligation and responsibility alone which it teaches; it is pardon and peace—it is boundless love—it is sovereign mercy through a Mediator. The guilty would never

look upon him with affectionate and godly fear, never seek him, if they had never heard of "the word of reconciliation."

The germinant principle of all moral evil is alienation of heart from God. This is the bitter fountain. They are *healing* waters alone that can purify it. If the alienated affections are ever reconciled, it must be because God is reconcilable, and is himself on the mercy-seat, there discovering his amiable and lovely character, there beseeching them to be reconciled to him, and there assuring them that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn from his wicked way and live. The great motive by which St. Paul urged men in other days to the unreserved consecration of themselves to the living, active, and self-denying service of the God of our salvation, is the great motive still. "I beseech you," says he, "by the *mercies* of God." The great and holy impulse with him and the early Christians was "the love of Christ;" "*the love of Christ constraineth us.*" The Father of mercies would awaken in the bosom of the anxious and self-condemned not only the emotions of conscious shame, but of thrilling gratitude and glowing hope. Of shame that his claims have been so disregarded, their obligations so lightly felt, and they have so sinned against heaven and before him; of gratitude, that his mercies have

been so unduly appreciated by creatures who are less than the least of them, and so deserving his indignation and wrath; of hope, because they see that, although they deserve his frown, "fury is not in him." In inviting the guilty to seek him, he would have them think of him as he is; not less holy, not less a sin-hating and sin-punishing God, but also as a propitious God, a loving God, and waiting to be gracious. He would have them dwell on the remembrance of his mercy, and thus arrest them in their downward course. Though they treat him as though he were their enemy—though they keep aloof from him, oppose his will, are hostile to his purposes, traduce his reputation, and injure his cause, yet all the while he is their best friend, unwearied in the exercise of his kindness, consulting and studying their highest interests. He would have them understand who it is that bids them seek him. They have been wont to regard him as all sternness and repulsiveness—as an implacable foe, with the frown of wrath upon his brow, the threat of damnation on his lips, and the thunderbolt of vengeance in his hand. He would have them look into his heart, and see what an infinitude of love is there. He would have them look up, and look around them, and listen while he says, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord—*thoughts of peace, and not of evil.*"

This is the source of all the expostulations of the Gospel with unrepenting men. This is the basis of the invitations to his creatures to seek him; this is the encouragement of the most guilty; and this the foundation of the promise that those who seek shall find. It is a holy throne they come to, and it is holiness that awes. It is a throne of justice they come to, and it is justice that alarms. But it is a throne of grace they come to, and by a new and living way which the great High-priest hath consecrated, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. Here and thus they can come. God's love to man is here revealed, and man's love to God is here awakened. Here he is to be sought unto in the endearing relation of the God of grace and the God of salvation. This is the great principle of the Gospel economy, and the one which introduces us to God as condescending to hold intercourse with men, and which throws such a radiance of hope around his throne. We know now that such sinners *may* seek his face, and may better understand and appreciate the promise, "And ye shall seek me, and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart, and I will be found of you, saith the Lord." Thus does the God of heaven proclaim himself propitious, and to be sought unto by the children of men. We are now prepared to show,

II. In the second place, that they shall find him WHEN THEY SEARCH FOR HIM WITH ALL THEIR HEART.

Multitudes fall into mistake in the momentous concern of their souls' salvation. They think they want religion, and desire to obtain God's favor. But they do not know *how* to obtain it. It is altogether a new business to them. They know they must do something. They know they must *repent and believe the Gospel*. But how to do this they can not tell. It seems to them they would give worlds if they could only be assured that their peace is made with God; but they think this is impossible, for they know not how to begin. They have sought, but they have not found, and they know not what to do. Now to all this embarrassment God himself replies, "And ye shall seek me, and ye shall find me when ye search for me with all your heart." The duty is explicit, and the promise is sure. The important question, therefore, for us to look at is, What is it *truly to seek the Lord—to search for him with all the heart?* To this we reply,

1. In the first place, it is to seek him *sincerely and with honesty of purpose*. God reproveth his ancient people for not seeking sincerely and honestly. "Yet for all this, treacherous Judah hath not turned unto me with the whole heart, but *feignedly*, saith the Lord." Men often seek him

in a most unmeaning way. They are attentive to all the forms of religion, and there they stop. They are satisfied with a mere external, heartless seeking, as empty and heartless as the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal. Others seek hypocritically; they are seeking *themselves* while they profess to seek *Him*. God's ancient people, in the days of the Prophet Hosea, and in troublous times, professed to seek *Him*; but God says of them, "They have not cried unto me *with their heart* when they howled upon their beds." The same insincerity he charges upon the Jews by the Prophet Zechariah: "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast *unto me*, even to *me*?" The proof of a man's sincerity is found in his conduct. God told this people that, amid all their seeking, they "would not *frame their doings* to turn unto their God." Men there are who abound in their religious duties, yet they do not break off any of their sins. All such seeking is but vain oblation; it is abomination; God can not away with it. When they spread forth their hands, he will hide his eyes from them; yea, when they make many prayers, he will not hear. Such persons have no true desires to *serve God*, but rather that he should *serve them*. They care nothing for *Him*, but only for themselves. They want religion in order to quiet the clamors of

a guilty conscience; and this is all they want. They would like to get religion enough to save them from hell, and this is all they care for.

Now this is not seeking the Lord with all the heart. It is not seeking *Him* at all, for it does not seek the proper object. It is an insincere, hypocritical, and selfish seeking. God himself is sought only where there is an honest and true heart. Whoever else men trifle with, they may not trifle with God. We must be honest in seeking him, and have no by-ends in view. Our chief end must be to "glorify God and enjoy him forever." When the Psalmist resolved, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after," that one thing was God himself. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after God, the living God." This was true and honest seeking. The soul that truly seeks him would fain give him the first place in his affections. On all the powers of his body and faculties of his soul, on all he is, and on all he has, and with a full heart, he would inscribe "holiness to the Lord," desirous to make the authority of God his rule, the grace of God his encouragement and motive, the glory of God his end, and the favor of God his portion. Whether he lives, he would live to the Lord, or whether he dies, he would die to the Lord; living and dying, he would be the Lord's. God himself is

witness of such desires, and prayers, and efforts, as true and honest seeking.

2. In the second place, to seek the Lord with all the heart is to *seek him earnestly*. There is a slothful way of seeking that never finds him. It was a proverb in Israel that "the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." Slothful seeking will end in spiritual poverty and everlasting want. Men may desire to go to heaven rather than to go to hell; and who does not? But what does such desire, nay, what does such solicitude amount to, if it is not followed up by corresponding effort? And what do these efforts amount to if they are intermitted at the first intimation of the Tempter, the first call of pleasure, the first prospect of gain, the first thoughtless companion, alluring them from the mercy-seat, and turning away their thoughts from the "one thing needful?" There is no earnest seeking in such a mind. These slothful efforts, diverted by a thousand conflicting claims—this wavering, unsteady heart—this half-formed purpose, or formed to-day and changed to-morrow, is just as fatal in the business of religion as in the business of the world. No, beloved hearers, this will never do. The mind must be absorbed in this great matter. It is a *race* you are called to run, and you must lay aside every weight and every besetting sin. It is a *warfare* you are engaged in, and you may

not fight uncertainly, and as one that beateth the air. It is an incorruptible crown you are reaching after, and you must watch, and pray, and strive for the mastery. You must *labor* to enter into that rest, lest you come short of it. You must *strive* to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. It is as true now as it was in the days of John the Baptist, that the "kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Half the seekers in the world are but half in earnest. If they would read the Scriptures more frequently and solemnly, and with fervent desires for their illuminating and sanctifying influence, they would learn with the Psalmist that "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." If they would oftener repair to their closets, and cast themselves before God, and pour out their souls in prayer, not in that wandering manner they have too often done, but with earnest wrestling, feeling that they can not let him go, and that they can never again rise from their faces until they have given their hearts to him, and obtained his pardoning love, they would prove the truth of the promise, "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shall thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find

the knowledge of God." If they would avoid every thing that is calculated to dissipate their thoughts, and set upon the work of their soul's salvation as their grand care; if they would carry the same strength of desire with which the men of the world seek after wealth, or honor, or fame, into the concerns of eternity and the soul; if difficulties do not dishearten them; if they can endure trials, sustain ridicule and reproach, and forsake all in order to follow Christ, they would more often say, "He hath taken my feet from the horrible pit and miry clay, and set them upon a rock, and put a new song into my mouth." Those who are in earnest in this matter feel that they are utterly and eternally lost, and that, unless the God of heaven appear for their help, they must eventually be swallowed up in a deluge of wrath. They have made up their minds to let the world go, and seek to do the will and secure the salvation of the Gospel. They know it will profit them nothing to gain the whole world and lose their own souls. To them the treasures of grace are more than all the treasures of earth. Above all other things they would know the living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

3. To seek the Lord with all the heart is *to seek him in his own appointed way*. Men often seek the favor of God under the impression that they

shall in some way lay him under obligations to them, and expect to induce him to grant them favor in consequence of what they themselves have done. They complain that he does not hear their cry. "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?" They mean to *procure* the divine mercy rather than *receive* it as the *gift* of God through Jesus Christ.

Seekers of this description have yet to learn that "it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy that he saves us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he sheds on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior." Every disciple of the New Testament understands that, in order to accept the salvation of the Gospel as the gift of God, he must renounce this self-righteous spirit and lie at the foot of the cross. There are many ways to death, but there is but one way to the life eternal. That way is through Jesus Christ. "I am the way," saith the adorable Savior, "the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." True religion is full of Christ; its spirit and its hopes are full of Christ; all its promises are yea and amen in Christ. Whoever seeks to enter into the divine kingdom without Christ

will not be able. Those who search for the Lord with their whole heart feel their need of a Savior, because they see the justice of their condemnation. They take all the blame and shame to themselves, and justify their Maker. They are sensible that they can never make the least atonement for their sins, or possess the least righteousness of their own, and that there is no way for them to be pardoned of a holy God but through Him whom God himself has set forth and accepted. They not only feel their need of a Savior, but see the Lord Jesus to be the very Savior they need, and every way adapted to their character and their wants. And more than this, they heartily approve this way of salvation. They hear the Savior's inviting voice, and confide in his willingness to receive all who come to him, not excepting themselves. And in this confidence they seek his face, encouraged by the assurance that he is as willing to receive *them*, if they will only come to him in the appointed way, as he was to receive the holiest saint in heaven. And they venture their souls upon him, and commit to him every part of their salvation. By faith and prayer they look to him, and seek from him all their supplies of life and strength. Daily do they give themselves up to God upon the merits of his Son. They can not find peace and joy until they take hold of Jesus Christ. They are

embarrassed and in darkness; conscience perplexes them, and they are afraid of God until they see him upon the great propitiatory throne, and go and cast the burden of their sins there.

4. To seek the Lord with all the heart is to seek him *in humble dependence on the Spirit of all grace*. A self-dependent seeking is of very little account, except to show the sinner his own weakness. He may have fervent desires to obtain religion, and form many a vigorous resolution to seek it; but if he goes forth in his own strength, he will fail of attaining his object. He feels *too strong*, and fails through mere self-confidence. Until this overweening self-confidence is superseded by humble dependence on almighty grace, he will never become a Christian. The Scriptures teach us that "he that trusteth to his own heart is a *fool*." Elsewhere they say, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise, let him become a fool that he may be wise." What are the sinner's resources? His own goodness? He has none. This is what he is seeking. His own power of exertion to obtain a conquest over his wicked heart? Alas! he has never seen the plague of his own heart, and does not know how impotent he is. He who sets out to obtain religion in this way must go and sit at the Savior's feet, and hear him say, "No man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him." He

must, indeed, work out his own salvation, but *how* must he work it out? The apostle answers this question in those memorable words: "Work out your own salvation," not with the feeling that your own arm hath done this, but "with *fear and trembling*, because it is *God that worketh in you* to will and to do of his good pleasure." The *obligation* of men to become holy, and their absolute *dependence* on God for holiness, are truths which underlie the whole economy of grace and the entire history of Christian experience. They are the two great truths which, next to the primary truth that the great Lawgiver is propitious through the atonement of his Son, have more to do in the conversion of the soul to God, and in the progress of its sanctification, than any truths in the Bible. They crowd the conscience, and, when they are deeply felt and sensibly realized, the heart is broken and subdued; the stony heart is taken away, and becomes the heart of flesh. While, therefore, we urge every awakened sinner to seek the Lord with all energy and perseverance, and would stimulate his agency to the highest action, we at the same time tell him that his only hope must rest on God alone. He must be cast down from the pinnacle of his self-sufficiency and pride into the dust, and there learn, and love to learn, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth

mercy." His eye and his heart must be open to the great truth that nothing can cancel his obligation to "repent and believe the Gospel," and at the same time open to the great truth which is spread on every page of the Bible, that "faith is the gift of God," and that the soul's renovation is achieved by power no less than that "which God wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." When he has learned and cheerfully submitted to these truths, he has become a Christian, and already entered upon the way of life. To the joy of his heart, he has found that there are resources of grace and strength without himself, and that the vilest, poorest, weakest sinner may lean upon an almighty arm. When he has struggled and persevered in his own strength till he has become exhausted and discouraged, in humble and happy dependence upon omnipotent grace he cries out, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

And who does not see that this is the only state of mind fitted to receive and enjoy the grace he has been so long seeking? There are millions now in heaven who, if they were to narrate their own experience, would give, in substance, the following account of their religious exercises: I was early awakened to a sense of my lost condition as a sinner, and resolved that I would become a Christian. I entered on the most earnest atten-

tion to the means of grace, read the Scriptures, and prayed often. Nothing kept me from the house of God, nor from the meetings of prayer with his people. I sought the counsel of religious friends, and let my case be known to my minister. I separated myself from all ensnaring associations, and employed much of my time in reading religious books, and in meditation on my obligations and guilt, on my ruin and helplessness, on heaven and hell, and on Christ and his Gospel. I came to the task again and again, and wondered why I was not reconciled to God and a believer in Jesus. It seemed to me that God dealt severely with me, and I was ready to complain that he was a hard master. I continued in this state of mind for a season, imagining that I wanted religion, sensible that I could not get it without divine assistance, and thinking that I was willing to make almost any sacrifice if I could only tell how to get a heart to love God. But in a little while I began to view *myself* in a different light. I saw myself to be a greater sinner than ever before. I saw that my heart was totally opposed to God and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, and that I desired salvation, not in God's way, but in my own. I felt that all my past desires were wrong, and that I had never really desired that holiness of heart without which no man can see the Lord. Thus I continued,

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growing worse instead of better, until I felt there was no hope for me. I quarreled with my obligations, and I quarreled with my dependence. But I saw that all my objections were futile, and all my excuses wrong, and nothing but refuges of lies, because they threw the blame of my impenitence on my Maker. I felt most deeply that I must perish forever, or yield myself without reserve into the hands of God. I knew he was long-suffering and gracious, and that very great are his mercies. This sweet thought relieved my distress, and was a light shining into the dungeon of my soul, and I came to the conclusion to cast myself entirely upon Him who came to seek and save that *which was lost*. Then I was happy. I had peace and joy in believing. I felt as I never felt before. The living God was my refuge and my portion. I could give up my own will, and be any thing or nothing, as he should please. I could trust him. I threw myself into the hands of his sovereign mercy.

This is seeking the Lord, and searching for him with all the heart. This is the seeking spoken of throughout the Bible, and the seeking to which the divine promise is annexed, "And I will be found of you, saith the Lord." He has not promised to be found by any other seeking than this. "I believe," says that blessed man, Robert M'Cheyne, "that it is impossible in the nature

of things that God would make a promise to an unconverted man. Accordingly, all God's promises are made to Christ, and to every sinner that cleaves on to Christ. But unconverted persons are those who have never come to Christ; therefore there are no promises made to them. God nowhere promises to make them anxious. He nowhere promises to bring them to Christ. He nowhere promises to keep them one moment out of hell." Nothing short of this effectual seeking has the divine promise to rest upon. I add,

5. In the fifth place, to seek the Lord with all the heart is *to seek in season*. The time is coming when many shall seek to enter into his kingdom and shall not be able. Their fervent desires and their earnest efforts prove fruitless. Awake from their stupidity they may—ay, they may; agonize they may; but it is all in vain. They shall be shut out from the divine favor. They had overlooked the direction, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." Once there was an "acceptable time and the day of salvation." But that time is past, and that day gone down. It will be of no avail to knock when the door is shut, or seek when it is too late to find. The day of the sinner's merciful visitation is gone then, and his soul is lost. He may live on, but it will be in increased hardness of heart, and only to fill up the

measure of his iniquity. The call of the Gospel may sound upon his ears, but does not tell upon his heart. Nothing moves him, nor will he ever turn from his iniquities. He has no aspirations after holiness now, and no intention ever to become a follower of the Lamb. The world prevails; sin conquers; holy influences are grieved, and the Spirit of God has left him forever. And in this final abandonment we read his doom. From one degree of impenitency to another, he goes forward to such a pitch of insensibility and foolhardiness that his iniquity is full.

And when his iniquity is full *he dies*. The last opportunity, the last hope is gone. He has crossed the line between time and eternity. Death, a stranger to his thoughts, has come upon him with a double ruin for having been kept out of view so long. He opens his eyes on the world of spirits, and realizes the horrors of the eternal pit.

Beloved hearers, if you would seek the Lord with your whole heart, you must seek him *now*. If you would enjoy all that the divine love and mercy can give to and do for a saved sinner, seek him *now*. Death is too near to talk of a more convenient season. And to think of *dying alone*, without God and without hope! To the very verge of the cold river weeping friends may accompany you; they may bend over you there—

they may cling to you there. But that one long wave from the sea of eternity sweeps you from the shore, and you go forth alone, to appear before God, with all your guilt upon you, and to arm against you the thunders of his wrath.

Therefore *seek him now*, while it is called to-day. Go not up to the judgment without one honest, believing effort to make the Judge your friend. Oh, the disappointment then to hear him say, "I never knew you; depart from me, all ye that work iniquity!" Ye who are anxious about your soul's salvation, and find no peace and comfort, *seek him now*, and now fall into the outstretched arms of his sovereign mercy. Do not put off this great concern. Even amid these dark clouds which overshadow this beloved land, and though your worldly prospects may be obscured, it is still with you the day of God's merciful visitation. These disappointments are "blessings in disguise." The *day* of vengeance is in God's heart, because "the *year* of his redeemed is come." Wait not, then, till the harvest is past, lest the frost of eternal night settle down upon your souls—lest the bleak winds of an eternal winter sigh through your prison, and eternal groans and curses echo from its halls. You know not the tenderness and strength of that love and mercy that would rescue you from such a destiny as this. All nature cries out upon this unbelief.

You look to the heavens, and the voice of almighty Love speaks from every overshadowing cloud and every orb of light. Their silent appeal is, "*Seek the Lord*, and ye shall live. *Seek him* that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the earth; the Lord of Hosts is his name!" But what are these benignant appeals from the brilliancy, and beauty, and majesty of nature, compared with that voice of love and mercy which is echoed and re-echoed amid that zone of light which belts the cross of "God manifest in the flesh?" What are they all compared with the fixed, unvarying Shekinah that rests upon the Christian Propitiatory, where the freeness and the fullness of pardons is held out to all, and the glories of immortality made over to all who seek the Lord? Oh, may these offers of mercy meet with the homage of your humble and affectionate confidence, and no unbelief of yours intercept the gift of these immortal glories! Wide and deep is the separation which sin has made between you and the God of nature and grace. But there is a ligament by which you may again be united, where the sinner's faith and the divine faithfulness fill up the chasm. Will you not lay hold of these firm securities made

known to you by the Mediator of this new covenant, and no longer refuse nor distrust that mercy which is in such alliance with truth? Oh, rather seek after it, and you shall find it. Its thoughts are thoughts of peace, and not of evil. Its voice is the expostulation of your heavenly Father's tenderness, stooping from the heights of his glorious throne, and inviting you, a helpless wanderer, to his heart of love.

SERMON XII.

EMBASSY OF RECONCILIATION.

2 CORINTHIANS, v., 20. — “*Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God.*”

EVERY intelligent being in the universe is either the friend of God or his enemy—for God or *against* him—actually arranging himself on the Lord's side, or on the side of his great adversary—the lover of his law, his Gospel, his truth, and the abettor of the great principles of his government, or a dissatisfied and rebellious subject, alike hostile to the character and claims of his heavenly Prince, a murmurer at his providence, and a despiser of his grace.

The unavoidable implication of the text is, that men are by nature God's enemies. There would be no propriety in calling upon them to be *reconciled* to God if they were already his cordial friends. The apostles every where assumed the fact that all unbelieving, unrepenting, unconverted men are at war with God, and affirm that they were ambassadors for Christ, sent forth in their

Master's name, and by his authority, to beseech these his enemies to become his friends.

We have affecting messages to those who are the friends of God. They are delightful messages; nor is any department of our pulpit ministrations so pleasant in itself, or so pleasant to our own hearts, as to encourage and comfort these pilgrims of Zion on their heavenly way—to stimulate them in their conflicts, and urge them on to victory; and, in their trials and darkness, to hold up before them, living and dying, the torch of heavenly truth and love. Yet, when we consider the great object of the Savior's coming, the actual condition of the masses even in Christian lands, and the import of the message he has brought to our lost world, we may well feel that it is not a duty of minor importance often to testify to those who are dead in sin repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and, as his messengers, beseech them to become reconciled to God. In truth and soberness, we lose sight of the first and great object of our embassy if we overlook or in any way depreciate this important part of ministerial service.

The angels of light never had any controversy with their Maker. Their character and conduct are conformed to his will; they love him and are beloved of him. There are no jarring elements to disturb the everlasting harmony between them.

But it is far otherwise in this apostate and revolted world. With the exception of those who are renewed by grace, men every where have a controversy with the God that made them.

1. In the first place, their *nature is diverse from his*. Darkness is not more opposed to light than the character of wicked men is opposed to the character of God. God is holy, and they are unholy; he delights in holiness, and they delight in sin. Wickedness, either in its grosser or more embellished forms, is the atmosphere they breathe, the earth they tread upon, the scenery that charms them; he breathes the pure air of heaven, is regaled with its purity, and is himself its light, its beauty, its glory. His pure mind is governed by those eternal principles of truth, rectitude, and love that never alter; they are creatures of impulse and passion, governed only by their evil propensities, their love of error, and the supreme love of self and the world.

Naturalists tell us of opposite and jarring elements in the world of nature—elements that can not amalgamate, and which, if they come in contact, produce effervescence or explosion. And though the holy God, because he is out of sight is out of mind, may not always produce conscious hostility in the bosoms of wicked men, yet, when his spotless purity comes in collision with the disgusting impurities of the human heart, and

frowns upon them, and contends with them, wicked men themselves, however great their self-complacency, become sensible that "the carnal mind is enmity against God." When we call to mind that the relations they sustain to him are such as are ever and anon bringing these clashing natures and clashing interests into collision; that God is not far from every one of us; that he is deeply interested in their character; that he is angry with them every day, and holds them accountable to him as their Lawgiver and Judge, we can understand how and why it is that, with all his tenderness and compassion, he looks upon *them* with abhorrence, and they regard *him* with a suspicious eye and an unfriendly heart.

2. Their *conduct is inimical to him*. The character of men is decided by their *conduct*, just as certainly as the tree is known by its fruit. If wicked men were at heart the friends of God, how would they conduct themselves toward him? Would it not be by a readiness to obey his commands, by faith in his word, by confidence in his faithfulness and love, by a cheerful submission to his will, by habitual and intimate fellowship with him, and by honest and self-denying efforts to glorify him, and advance his cause and kingdom in the world? Yet such is not the conduct of the unbelieving, unrepenting sinner. The course pursued by all such is opposed to God's wishes

and authority. What God requires they refuse; what he forbids they perform; what he offers they reject; what he decides they call in question; what he does they murmur at. They walk contrary to him at every step. When he invites them to penitence and pardon through his Son, they make light of the invitation, and will not come to Jesus Christ even that they might have life. Gratuitous and wonderful as these proposals are, they fall out with them. They will not submit to the teachings of Christ as their Prophet, nor trust in his atonement as their Priest, nor bow to his authority as their King. They are not reconciled to the revealed conditions of his salvation, nor would they take pleasure in so holy a salvation on any conditions. There is nothing in which their hostility so emphatically shows itself as in their rejection of this Son of God, virtually crucifying him afresh, and putting him to open shame. Strange to say, the bitterest contest they have with God, and he with them, is at that cross where he so tenderly urges them to penitence and hope, and where they so obdurately refuse his entreaties.

3. *All their views are opposed to his.* Men are not brutes, nor are they devils—they are intelligent and thinking men; as such God addresses them, and as such he will judge them. And the unhappiness is that *their views on all moral sub-*

jects are so different from his. He has revealed and declared his views; but they will have none of his counsel, and insist upon thinking and judging for themselves. He maintains his prerogative as the God only wise, while they dispute it. He asserts his rights as their sovereign, while they question and impugn them. He affirms and defends the equity and rectitude of his law, while they dispute and quarrel both with the precept and the penalty. He charges upon them a moral turpitude, sufficiently humbling indeed, and fearfully true, which, instead of confessing, they ingeniously palliate and boldly deny. He claims the right of doing what he will with his own, and dispensing his favors according to his own good pleasure; and when he calls upon them to rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, they inwardly, if they do not openly, declare that they will not have him to reign over them. There must, therefore, be conflict between natures, and claims, and conduct, and views so diametrically adverse.

4. Wicked men themselves *are conscious of this hostility*. The consciousness of wicked men themselves testifies that they are restive under the force of God's truth, and the consequent obligations he lays upon them. They would fain break these bonds and cast these cords asunder; and they are offended with him because they can not

dissolve them. They would fain flee out of his hands ; and contend with him because they know he is above them, and that it is impossible for them to cancel the bonds which fasten them to his throne, or weaken, or untie, or cut the cords which bind them to truth and holiness. God is not pleased with them, and they are not pleased with him ; this is the sum and substance of the controversy. And while on God's part it is conducted with great lenity and forbearance, and, at the same time, with great firmness and decision, on their part it is often conducted with no tolerant spirit. There are seasons when God draws so near to them, and makes his truth so deeply searching, that the guilty rebel is incensed. The heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing, while He that sitteth in the heavens laughs at them, and has them in derision. And this not unfrequently infuriates them. The breach is wide. They have no friendly intercourse with him. They ask him for nothing, and they thank him for nothing. They have no fellowship with him in his Word, none in the closet, none in the sanctuary, none at his table, none in the bright hours of prosperity, and none in the dark hours of trial. Their disaffection is strong, and the controversy decided in its character. Nothing can explain it away. Explanation on God's part does but assert and vindicate

his claims, while all attempts at explanation on their part only involve them in deeper embarrassment. It is a solemn and fearful controversy. Wicked men can not abide what God insists on, and God can not abide what they refuse. God will revoke nothing, nor will they revoke their hostility. God has no concessions to make, and they will make none. He will not submit to them, and they will not submit to him. On God's part it is a contest for principle, for truth and godliness, and for the glory of his name. He will not, because he may not, yield it without abandoning his throne, without proving faithless to the Son of his love, and without disregarding the great interests of his kingdom. The controversy thus assumes a serious aspect; it is deep and earnest, and renders more imperative and important,

II. The second and principal object of our discourse, which is to urge upon all these enemies of God the duty of becoming reconciled to him.

"Be ye reconciled to God." This is the precept, and this is what God himself beseeches men to do. Here it behooves us to understand what this duty is. It is not to *try and seek to be reconciled*. This they may do; this they ought to do; but if they *rest* in seeking, and go no farther, they will rest in their hostility. No; it is *to be* reconciled to God. It is not simply to *re-*

solve to be reconciled ; this many a man has done, who has sinned against his own resolutions and prayers, and died God's enemy. No ; it is *to be* reconciled, by cordially falling in with God's proposals of reconciliation. Nor is it to make *mere pretensions and professions* of amity ; this is easily done, while the heart and spirit of rebellion remain. Nor is it any *superficial* reconciliation, arising from the belief that the controversy itself is superficial, and that the human heart is no such enemy to God as it is asserted to be in God's word ; or that there are truths and principles there revealed which are so offensive that it is not necessary to become reconciled to them. No, no. All this is but smothering the flame which will afterward break out. Nor is such a reconciliation of any avail ; God can not be deceived, and will not be mocked. The reconciliation must be unfeigned and ingenuous in order to be real. From being God's enemies they must become his friends. Our duty and privilege as Christ's ambassadors are to entreat men to be thus reconciled, and we urge this by the following considerations :

1. In the first place, we ask the enemies of God to *inspect their own character, and look at the position they occupy as his creatures and subjects*. It is a startling truth, when once brought home to the conscience, that there is, as we have just

shown, in every unrenewed heart, a rooted and imbodied hostility to the God of heaven. It is a melancholy truth, and enough to convince and alarm any man, and put him upon some expedient of reconciliation. It is a most serious charge—a shocking charge! If it were true of one man in a thousand, you would think that man possessed a fearful character. I know not what worse could be said of Pharaoh, or Caligula, or Antiochus Epiphanes, those recorded monsters in wickedness, than that they were the enemies of God. Nay, I know not what worse can be said of the devils in hell. Enmity to God is the mother monster of all the wickedness and misery of the wickedest men on earth, and of the fallen angels in the world of darkness. The atheist, the infidel, the profligate, the sensualist, the liar, the thief, the murderer, may trace all their pride, and envy, and wrath, and malice, and strife, and dishonesty, lust and blood, to their hostility to the character and authority of God. Yet this is the great principle of wickedness that controls the character and conduct of the great mass of men. In Christian lands it is under strong restraint; there are influences that modify and control it, so that many an enemy of God puts on a fair exterior. His enmity is not only kept from being acted out, but is mantled and glossed over by many a moral virtue. He finds it for his in-

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terest and his honor to *tolerate* the Deity, and even to pay him some outward respect and service. But his heart is alienated from God; God has no share in it; the latent enmity still lurks within his bosom; and when all these restraining influences are removed, it will show itself in all its atrocious rebellion.

Now we ask you to look at such a character as this, for this is the position which all the enemies of God occupy. Who does not see that it is an unnatural, ungrateful, atrocious character, and a position which no right-minded and right-hearted man would consent to occupy an hour? Unnatural, for is he not thy rightful Lord? Ungrateful, for is he not thy Father that bought thee, and made and established thee? is he not the God in whose hand thy breath is, who gives rain and fruitful seasons, and from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift? Atrocious, because he is a holy God, glorious in holiness, supremely venerable and supremely lovely. Do ye thus requite the Lord, oh foolish people and unwise? Is it not true that his enemies have hated him without a cause? nay, more, is it not true that they hate him most for those very perfections of his nature on account of which every holy mind in the universe most loves him, and that his unblemished character is the ground of their enmity? The stand-point of our expostula-

tion, therefore, is, that in all this controversy *God is right and the sinner is wrong*. It is the sinner's business frankly, ingenuously, promptly, to give up the controversy with God, and not God's business to give up the controversy with the sinner. He never gave his enemies any cause for disaffection, and has only requited their evil with good. It is not God who has any thing to retract, or relinquish, or be sorry for; it is they who ought to repent in dust and ashes, and from a deep sense and humble confession of their own vileness ascribe righteousness to their Maker, and take shame and confusion of face to themselves. They may well exclaim, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand?" and well may they "smite upon their breast and say, God be merciful to me, a sinner!" This is right; this is what God requires of them; and this is their obvious and imperative duty. Some such conviction and some such emotions as these are indispensable to a reconciled state of mind; they lie at the foundation of the rebel's return, and enter into all true apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. Nor does he ever give up the controversy until he gives this indication of a relenting spirit, and takes his proper place at God's footstool, and bows at the cross of his dear Son. Then the controversy is over. The sinner is no longer God's enemy, but his *friend*. He looks

upon him with a friendly eye and a loving heart. He restores to him that love, that confidence, and that submission which never ought to have been alienated from him, and calls back into sweet union and fellowship those ardent affections which have been so wrongfully and wickedly estranged from Him who ought ever to have been his highest joy.

Our appeal is, therefore, to the sinner's conscience. Conscience intuitively decides that every man in the world ought to be thus the friend of God. Impaired as it is by sin, it cries out against the wickedness, the folly of that enmity which revolts from the most lovely, rebels against the most righteous and equitable, and distrusts the most gracious and trustworthy. The day is coming when conscience will do its office in this matter. It will upbraid the sinner for his numberless overt transgressions; but it will also fasten a sense of guilt upon him because he would not be reconciled to God. And it shall never cease from its upbraidings, but prove at last the worm that never dies. You know, beloved friends, all the wickedness your heart is privy to in your treatment of the God of heaven. Will you continue to treat him thus—giving your hearts to every thing else, and leaving none for God? An honest view of your own character, and the position you occupy as his enemies, is enough to show

you that you are on the wrong side of the question, and that it behooves you to abandon this controversy with your Maker.

2. Still more urgently would we press this reconciliation, in the second place, *from the revealed way and the revealed conditions of reconciliation made known in the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.*

That is a remarkable declaration of the apostle in which he says that "when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." It is obvious that there is no actual reconciliation *pending* actual enmity, nor can this be the apostle's meaning. The meaning is that when men were dead in trespasses and sins, and enemies to God by wicked works; when obvious and imperative as the duty was of their return to him from whom they had revolted; when no way of reconciliation was known, and no reconciling influences had gone forth upon this hostile world, and when every where the cry was heard, "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God?" there was a movement in heaven toward this guilty world which arrested the stroke of justice, which proclaimed the offended Deity as the God of pardons, which vindicated the offers of mercy, and assured his enemies that he was ready to forgive the rebellion of all who drew nigh through the great Propitia-

tion. But for this there had been no day of grace, and no opportunity of repentance and heartfelt reconciliation, had men, unsolicited and of their own accord, thrown down their arms, and indicated a relenting and contrite spirit. But, even when they were enemies, the door of hope was not thus closed. Even when their enmity remained, God was propitious through the death of his Son.

The initiative, the first step in this reconciliation, therefore, was taken by God himself. It is not the wrong-doer who proposes terms of reconciliation, nor the weak and helpless who sue for peace and pardon from the strong and powerful. There was condescension, there was more than magnanimity in that the injured Deity made the proposals of peace. The insulted Deity, the Infinite One, in whose presence Seraphim cover their faces with their wings, bows his heavens and comes down to speak the words of peace and reconciliation to rebel men, and to tell them that, through the accepted satisfaction to his justice, his anger is turned away. Why he did not wrap himself in the mantle of his rectitude, and never allow this hostile world to look with hope toward his holy habitation; why he did not crush the generations of men, as he did the earlier and angelic race that rose in arms against him, and consign us all to chains of darkness, can be account-

ed for only because his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways. It was not in his loving and gracious nature so to do. Fury is not in God. The cry of these wretched and dying millions, enemies though they were, entered into his ears, and, to the adoring admiration of angels and men, and for the glory of his great name, he would prove himself "mighty to save." Be the obstacles what they might, and cost what it may, he would thus express and gratify his love; he "so loved the world."

It was a dark problem to be solved, "How shall man be just with God?" One there was in heaven, and only one, who could compensate the claims of justice for the wrong and outrage of man, and who, by consenting himself, though God manifest in the flesh, to take the sinner's place, to be numbered with the transgressors, and to bear the sins of many. There was wisdom, nay, if I may so speak, there was *caution* in this procedure, lest it might be supposed that this mediatorial Prince and Sufferer appeared to take the part of this hostile world against its rightful Lord. There is no such treason as this in the cross of Christ; no abatement of the divine law in favor of the guilty; no distorted exhibition of the divine character; no soothing the rebel's mind by telling him that God never meant to show such displeasure against sin as he seems to

threaten, and calming his fears by intimations that he will forgive on the unpropitiated ground of the rebel's repentance and reformation. That Redeemer stands in the place of our surety. He is our ransom. He pays the debt of justice.

It is on this great fact that the ministry of reconciliation rests, and that we urge the unutterably tender claims of the risen Son of God. We do not ask you to make any reparation for the injuries you have done to the great Lord of heaven and earth; this he himself has cared for by appointing and accepting his well-beloved Son as the guardian of law and justice, and your sponsor to all their claims. Yet this one thing we entreat of you. God commands it. He may not dispense with it. It is that you accept this provision of his grace, and, instead of remaining his enemies, freely consent to become reconciled to him in this new and living way. This is the hinge on which your reception to the divine favor turns, not only because it binds you to Jesus Christ, but because it is the great test of character, and the great proof that, instead of justifying your rebellion, you condemn it, and instead of persevering in your hostility henceforth and forever, you turn from it with full purpose of and endeavors after new obedience. Such is the apostle's argument in our text. "We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God; *for* he

hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him!" We beseech you, enter into this treaty of peace. By his authority and in his name, by the freeness and tenderness of his condescending love, we pray you, in Christ's stead, to come into friendship with your Maker. You little know how ready he is to receive you. When, as his ambassadors, we take our stand at his cross, and point his enemies to those perforated hands and feet, and to that bleeding side; when, as we stand there, we hear him say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," oh, it is a heart-affecting thought that any should turn away from such a scene, and remain his enemies still. Now that the wall of partition on God's part is done away, and the barrier to the rebel's acceptance is thus broken down by him who is able to save to the uttermost, shall not these chilling suspicions and this hard-hearted enmity give way? Worms, and sinners, and enemies as you are, he stoops to entreat you. You are poor, and he would make you rich; orphans, and he would adopt you as the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. You are guilty and condemned, and he would give you pardon and peace. You have no justifying righteousness, and he would clothe you with his own. You have no personal holiness, and he would give you his Spirit, and make

you beautiful through the comeliness he puts upon you. You have no hope, and are without God in the world, and he would have you reconciled to God, and give you hopes that are imperishable and full of heaven. Shall, then, this revealed way, and these revealed conditions of reconciliation, be an offense to you? If so, then,

3. We premonish you, in the third place, that *you must abide the consequences*. As ambassadors for Christ, we must deliver his message as it is, unmutilated, unaltered, unmodified. We have no option in this matter, but are bound by his instructions. We rejoice greatly in being intrusted with the glad tidings of peace and salvation. It is an honor of which we are indeed most unworthy, and may well make us jealous for the honor of Him who sent us. He is a great God and a great King in all the earth. He weigheth the mountains in scales, and the hills as in a balance. He never changes his nature, his counsels, or his will, and whatever purpose he forms is fixed and permanent as his own eternity. He is a God at hand as well as a God afar off; nor is there any secret place where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from his eye or flee out of his hand. He is so holy that he can not look on sin; his averted eye turns from it; he has no fellowship with it; his nature shrinks from it in abhorrence and disgust as that abomi-

nable thing which his soul hateth. And because he is holy, a God of truth and without iniquity, he is just and right; just to angels, just to men, just to his friends and just to his enemies, just to his Son and just to himself; justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Oh, I would not be the enemy of such a God! Better for that man that he had never been born than that he should live and die the enemy of such a God.

Yet this is the great and glorious Being with whom the sinner is contending, and to whom he refuses to be reconciled. Infinite wisdom and love have done their best in providing a method of reconciliation; and if there be those who refuse it, or will not take the pains to repair to it, what else can they look for but that out of that hiding-place, all that is inflexible in rectitude, irrevocable in truth, severe in justice, and resistless in power, should array itself against them, even though he tread down the wicked in their place, and the smoke of their torments ascend forever and ever? Oh perverse and senseless worm! hast thou an arm like God? Is it not a desperate contest when a creature of yesterday throws his coat of mail about him, and rushes upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler? Devils know to their cost the bitterness and the hopelessness of this controversy, and so does Egypt, and Bab-

ylon, and Rome, and all the kingdoms, and all the individuals who have lived and died the enemies of God and his Christ, and who have been for centuries in hell. They have gone to his judgment-seat and received their doom. That which makes them the restive and wretched spirits they are, is that their cheerless and malignant bosoms are the seat of this bitter and corroding controversy with God. Men on the earth, and in these Christian sanctuaries, would scarcely be made to believe that, if they are not reconciled to God, there is that within them which sympathizes with this spirit, and that at no distant period they themselves will feel toward God just as the devils feel. Believe me, it is a fearful world toward which you are bending your course. The agitated and febrile spirit finds no rest there day nor night. Wave meets wave upon that stormy lake; the fiery tempest sweeps over it. O what a tumult of passions! what thoughts! what emotions! Thoughts that burn as they pass through the mind, and emotions that scorch and wither it! "Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? who among us can inhabit everlasting burnings?" And these thoughts are all fortified and enforced by the solemn truth,

4. In the fourth place, that the *time and opportunity for this reconciliation are for a limited period*. It will come to a close. We know not

when, but the last hour will come. This day of grace, and this opportunity for repentance, short and uncertain as they are, comprise all the sinner's hopes. Yes, ALL! He has this *reprieve*, and not an hour beyond it. Within these few circling days his character is to be unalterably formed for the world of everlasting retribution. It is "appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment." Once more, in this day of your merciful visitation, and before the things which belong to your peace are hidden from your eyes, "as ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD!"

SERMON XIII.

PERSONAL HOLINESS THE GREAT BLESSING.

ACTS, iii., 26.—“*Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*”

WHEN the Savior gave their commission to the apostles, he directed them to announce repentance and remission of sins to all nations, “beginning at Jerusalem.” The Gospel was preached *first* to the Jews; not until about nine years after the Redeemer’s ascension to heaven was it proclaimed to the Gentiles. The passage before us is contained in an address of Peter to *the Jews* at Jerusalem. In this address, he reminds them of their privileges as the descendants of Abraham, and of their consequent obligations: “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth *be blessed*. Unto you *first*, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” There are *four* important thoughts suggested by this declaration, which it shall be our object to illustrate and enforce.

I. The first of which is that THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL IS A MESSAGE OF BLESSING. It is a "new covenant." It is good news. "He who spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by *his Son*. They are *glad tidings of great joy* which he brings, and to all people." The law came by Moses, but *grace and truth* by Jesus Christ. The former is the ministration of death; the latter is the ministration of life. The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. This is the spirit, and this the scope and design of the Gospel of the Son of God. He came, not to condemn, but to save. His advent bodes no evil. It is a treaty of *peace* which he brings, and has for its aim and end not an amnesty merely, but a cessation of hostilities, and the reconciliation of man to God. It would convert the great battle-field of earth into the home of peace, and, instead of the wormwood and the gall, would dispense the waters of life. It is the selected expression of God's love to the guilty, having for its object the pardon of the condemned, the liberation of the slaves of sin and the curse, and, while it would thus extinguish the fires of hell and extract the tooth of the worm that never dies, gives the waters of life freely. It had its origin in the mere *good will* of God. It was not a measure which his rectitude and justice bound

him to adopt; it was wholly from the benevolent feelings of his own mind that he formed and carried it into effect. His heart was absorbed in it because it is so fitted to express and gratify his love to the guilty. He made every thing subserve the fulfillment of it; and he makes every thing subservient to it now, because it is such an expression, such a *gratification* of his love to the guilty. If God himself is glorious, he is eminently glorious in his love; he calls the Gospel "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God" because it so illustrates his love.

It was a glorious illustration of his character that he uttered his law on Sinai. But the glory of that memorable exhibition of the Godhead is eclipsed "by reason of *this* glory that excelleth." Through a host of impediments that stood between a holy Lawgiver and a sinful world, the love of God has found its way through them all.

When the cord which bound man to God and God to man was sundered; when the race was groaning under the weight of guilt and its Maker's curse; when sin swayed its iron despotism over it with unrestrained fury; when death was advancing to execute the sentence, and the grave was waiting, and hell was yawning to receive its countless victims; when this guilty world was sinking into the abyss, and the unquenchable

flame was about to encircle it on every side, and wrap it in its atmosphere of vengeance, then was it visited with this message of love. If we had never heard of it, we had now been hastening to the grave and to eternity to meet the doom of the second death. All hope was lost, and there was no possibility of escape, when this angel-messenger proclaimed, "Peace on earth, and goodwill to men." Is not this a message of blessing? Who doubts whether or not its great achievements are achievements of *blessing*? And when you became partaker of its blessings, and began, from these borders of the pit, to look upward toward the mansions of light, could you doubt that "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you?" Blessing, blessing is his mission. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, instructs them that the *reason* why God gave the Gospel such power in the formation of their character was "for the *great love* wherewith he loved them," and that, "in the ages to come, he might show the *exceeding riches of his grace* in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Grace is favor to the ill-deserving; it is the selectest expression of love, the highest form of blessing. The manifestation of the *grace of God* in all subsequent time, and to interminable ages, is here declared to be the great object of Christ's coming. Who does not see the unmingled benevolence of

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the Gospel, and what a place it deserves to hold in our guilty world and in our own hearts!

II. The second thought suggested by this passage is, that the *great blessing the Gospel imparts is personal holiness.*

It is possible that men may mistake the nature of these glad tidings and the kind of blessing which they impart. But God is as wise and holy as he is kind. He would not have them thus led astray, and therefore he is careful to describe the blessing which Christ came to procure and bestow. "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in *turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*" Men need blessing from God; and they may flatter themselves that all they need to make them happy is to be delivered from *suffering*, and to be made partakers of the prolonged luxury of sense. It is enough, in their judgment, that the divine wrath be averted from them; that death be robbed of his terrors and his sting; that the fires of hell be quenched. The truth on this subject is plain and must be understood. God himself could not make men happy unless they were holy. The great object of the Gospel is to deliver them from the power of sin. The character of God proves this. The importance of the object itself proves it. The unchanging obligations of the divine law prove it. Conscience proves it. There is a

law written and engraven upon the moral constitution of men which forbids all expectation of the divine favor without holiness. They are the best teachers of themselves when they themselves are taught by the word and Spirit of God. The work of the Holy Spirit proves it. The revealed condition of salvation proves it. The character of the heavenly world proves it. The place the doctrine of justification holds in the method of redemption proves it. That preaching of the cross, the tendency of which is to relax the obligations to holiness, is worse than useless. Free grace without personal holiness is a mutilated and distorted Gospel. It never comes close to the conscience if it fails in obligations of personal holiness. No man can enjoy its blessings who does not depart from iniquity. If he does not crucify the flesh, overcome the world, and fight the good fight of faith, never, never will he lay hold on eternal life.

Personal holiness, therefore, is well represented in our text as the great blessing the Savior came to bestow. He never would have left that holy and happy world where he was crowned with glory, and die here an ignominious death in order to save men in their sins. Not all the powers in the universe could have dragged him from his celestial throne for such a purpose as this. It would have been a wicked purpose; nor could

he countenance it without taking the part of this wicked world against God, conniving at its wickedness, and thus becoming a partaker in its rebellion. Such a procedure never could have been sanctioned by the supreme authority of heaven and earth; for it would have been, of all others, the surest way of bringing that authority into contempt. Christ himself is equally the friend of holiness with his adored Father. No being in the universe hates sin more than he, or has done so much to express his hatred of it and eradicate it from our earth. Suppose a man tried, convicted, and condemned for the crime of deliberate, willful, and malignant murder, and confined in prison awaiting the execution of his sentence. You pity him, and wish to save his life. You repair to his prison, and he tells you that, so far from repenting of what he has done, he only regrets that he did not do his fatal work more thoroughly, and that, if he ever gets abroad into the world again, he is resolved to multiply his crimes a hundred-fold. Now if, in your mistaken compassion, you should repair to the proper authorities, and at great labor and expense procure his pardon, you would be only doing on a small scale what Christ would have done on a scale vastly larger, if he had visited this prison-house of earth and proclaimed pardon and life to men who live and die in their sins. No; it was not for any

such purpose as this that he came. This is not the way in which he confers blessing. It is by *turning them from their iniquities*, and making them holy. He confers *no* blessing on the unrepenting and incorrigible, unless it be those temporal blessings which he can confer in perfect consistency with executing upon them the curse at last. They must "break off their iniquity by righteousness, and their transgressions by turning to God," or they can never enter into life. His language to this apostate world is, "*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" Without this, no man can be pardoned even for Christ's sake; the curse of a broken law rests upon him still. Christ's death, which is the only procuring cause of pardon, does indeed bring every man within the reach of an *offered* salvation; but, if he lives in sin and dies in sin, he can not *have* that salvation, because it is a holy salvation. If iniquity still rankles in his bosom, it is but the sharpened tooth of the immortal worm. He *must* turn from it, else the heaven which Christ came to bestow will be his supreme aversion and abhorrence. It is not only legally impossible, but it is not possible in the nature of things to make such a man blessed.

Suffering is not the greatest evil in the universe, nor is happiness the greatest good. No doubt the tendency of holiness is to produce hap-

piness ; but its praiseworthiness does not lie in its tendency, but in its nature. It has an intrinsic excellence of its own, separate and apart from its tendency. Inanimate and unconscious objects may have a happy tendency. Many an action has a useful tendency and a happy result, not only without any intention to secure such a result, but with a positively bad intention. Holiness itself has not always exerted a happy influence. It has forged the chains of confessors, and kindled the flames that have consumed an army of martyrs. It has made not a few of its disciples poor, and numbered with the offscouring of all things. It is praiseworthy for its own sake; else is there no praiseworthiness in the universe. Happiness is desirable, but it is not in itself morally excellent. Holiness is praiseworthy in itself and for its own sake. What a man's *condition* is is a secondary matter ; the great matter is his *character*. His character is the man himself ; God will take care of his condition if his character is duly cared for. It is character which Christ most thinks of and most provides for. God sent him that he might have a peculiar people—a virtuous and holy family, that would be an honor to his throne and empire, over whom he would rejoice to reign, and with whom he would be happy forever to dwell. Holiness and happiness are different things, but they will not

ultimately be separated. Personal holiness is just what this poor world ever has most needed, and most needs now. Give it this character, and, in the end, you make it blessed. It is this which all good men most prayed and most pray for; it is this which is the crown of all Christ's gifts. His coming accomplishes little unless his love of holiness is gratified by the gratified desire that his disciples should be holy. Nor will he be disappointed in this. To thousands upon thousands he has imparted this great blessing; to thousands more he will impart it, until those better days shall dawn when "the people shall be all righteous." It is for this that the heavens grew dark from the sixth hour to the ninth hour. It is for this that the Thunderer turned back the face of his throne, and the Sun of righteousness painted the rainbow on the cloud. It was for this that the great company of the heavenly hosts descended to proclaim good will to men, and that God raised up his Son Jesus to bless guilty and dying men.

III. The third thought which is suggested by the passage is that *the only way and means of procuring and imparting this great blessing is the incarnation and death of Christ.*

Simon Peter once exclaimed, "Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee; thou hast the words of eternal life." The Savior himself said to the

woman of Samaria, "If thou hadst known *who it is* that said unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of *him*, and he would have given thee living water." "He is exalted, a Prince and a Savior, to give *repentance* and remission of sins." These, with a multitude of other similar declarations of the sacred writings, show that the incarnation and death of Christ comprise the means which Infinite Wisdom and Love have selected to restore holiness to the alienated heart of man.

Among the fearful consequences of man's apostasy, it was not the least fearful that it placed him beyond the possibility of repentance and return. The lesson was thus read to the universe, that whoever ventured on this tremendous experiment, so far as created wisdom, and will, and power are concerned, did so at the peril of hopeless recovery. There must be some mighty movement in heaven in order to give rise to that moral movement on the earth, whereby there shall be a return of the sons and daughters of men, and a gathering of the nations to the God from whom they have revolted. There was such a movement; not a sudden arrangement, but one that had been long thought of, and was, indeed, the great forethought of the divine mind in the ages of eternity. There is a class of evangelical divines, represented, so far as I know, by no less

names than Paræus, and our own distinguished countryman, Dr. Emmons, who have taught that, while the atonement of Christ is the sole ground of forgiveness, personal holiness is bestowed, not on *the ground*, but only in *consequence* of Christ's atonement, forgiveness flowing *directly*, and personal holiness *indirectly* from his atoning sacrifice.* This nice distinction I do not find in the Bible. I learn from the Old Testament that personal holiness is a blessing which flows from that "new covenant" of which Christ is the Mediator; and I learn from the New Testament that men become sanctified *through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*. It is conceded that, without the shedding of blood, there could be no remission of sins; and, if there could be holiness without an atonement, there might be holy men who are not pardoned, and who must forever perish. Pardon and holiness are inseparable, and both flow through the cross of Christ. "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." The robes of the redeemed are washed white in the *blood of the Lamb*. It is the shedding of blood, and the sprinkling of this precious blood by the Holy Spirit, that pardons and purifies. The sacrifice of Christ is effective in that he sends the Holy Spirit, and procures holiness

* See Dr. Emmons's Sermon on "the Forgiveness of Sin only for Christ's sake."

as well as pardon. If personal holiness may be bestowed as a matter of mere sovereignty and without an atonement, why is it that none are renewed and sanctified without the Gospel, and where the incarnation and death of the Son of God are unknown? Who can sing that noble song of Wesley,

"Rock of Ages! cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee,
Let the water and the blood,
From thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the *double* cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure,"

except those whom the great redemption constrains to live, not unto themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again? If we look to the period proximately antecedent to his coming, we see little else than the extreme corruption of religion and manners throughout the pagan nations. Night is not darker than the day which then overhung the earth. If we look to the religious and moral condition of the Jewish nation, we find that they sympathized with the character and habits of the heathen, were guilty of the same crimes, and "did the same things." From the days of their last prophet to the time of Christ's incarnation, they slept the sleep of spiritual death, and as a nation were fast verging to absolute destruction.

And if from this survey you look over the

world at the present hour, in vain do you search for any traces of personal holiness where Christ and his Gospel are not known. There is intelligence, and learning, and refined civilization; but they are of no sort of use in effecting a transformation of the human character. There is nothing to illumine the understanding, rectify the conscience, or renovate the heart. There is nothing to guide and relieve, but every thing to bewilder and perplex. And when you look to the multitudes in Christian lands who "live without God in the world," you will find them where Christ and his Gospel are at heart rejected, and therefore have no sanctifying and saving power.

Yet, in this failure of every other agency, *one power* there was which could accomplish the work. When human wisdom was folly, human strength weakness, and every hope was turned into despair, "in the fullness of time God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, made under the law, not only to *redeem* them that were under the law, but that they might receive the *adoption of sons*." To his Son Jesus belongs this honor of "turning men away from their iniquities." It is not man's work; men are as helpless as they are ill-deserving. It is the unmerited work of Christ, who came thus to bless apostate men by pardon and holiness—or rather, I should say, holiness and pardon, for they are not pardoned until they are

first regenerated. Personal holiness is Christ's work throughout. He invites men to repentance; he tells them that all things are ready; he gives them assurance upon assurance that "him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out." And "the words that he thus speaks they are *spirit* and they are life." They possess a quickening and life-giving influence. They are associated with mightier agencies than man's, and are "the power of God to salvation."

It is under such training and discipline that the sinner, who most clearly perceives the causes of solicitude and alarm, also most clearly perceives the grounds of encouragement and confidence. There his career of holiness begins. In the strength of his divine Lord, he can struggle on with the world, the flesh, and the devil, because sin has received its death-wound, and because grace reigns. He is a repenting man, a holy man, a happy man, and a living witness that "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

IV. There is a fourth truth comprised in this passage, which is *the necessity of making this great object of Christ's mission a personal matter.*

"In turning away *every one of you* from his iniquities." We may not overlook this great feature of the Gospel, by which its adaptation,

its offers of mercy, its obligations to repentance, faith, and holiness, are addressed to *individual man*. These two little words, "every one," so frequently recurring in the Scriptures, are full of meaning, and show that *true religion is a personal thing*.

We dwell on this thought a few moments. Both in human and in the divine government, those features are the most important which respect *individual* character and destiny. It is not the individual that is dependent upon the masses so much as the masses upon the individual; nor is it through the masses that individual man is affected, so much as masses through individual and isolated man. There are social principles which the Gospel recognizes, and social relations which it protects and sanctifies, but it is by enforcing its obligations upon the individuals who form these social organizations. Aside from its conduct toward them in the present world; the divine government has nothing to do with the masses; it has no law, no Gospel but that which is addressed to man *personally*. There is no responsibility elsewhere. Sin is a personal matter, and holiness is a personal matter. Condemnation is a personal matter, and the offers of pardon, and pardon itself, is a personal matter. The Gospel makes its appeals to individuals; it individualizes every hearer and every reader of

its glad tidings, and says to him, "*He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.*" The whole scope and spirit of its instructions recognize the truth, "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise *for thyself*; and if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." Nowhere and in no degree does it ignore or make light of personal responsibility. It makes the issues of every man's eternity depend on *his* believing or *his* not believing the testimony which God has given concerning his Son, and for this "*every one of us must give an account of himself unto God.*"

And this simple principle, if we mistake not, has a length and breadth of application not always thought of. It cuts up, root and branch, the pretensions and hopes of those who say, "We have Abraham to our father;" and whose confidence and piety are found only in the fact that they belong to an external and sacred community, to which it is affirmed God has given his promises, and out of which there is no covenanted mercy. It shows the wickedness of the assumption that, be the man who or what he may, so long as he belongs to **THE Church**, he is safe. With equal certainty does it explode the notion that piety flows in channels prescribed by men; and is the attendant of sacramental rites dispensed by an apostolical priesthood. No man or set of men, be he pope, bishop, or presbyter,

and whether he can or can not trace his authority to an apostolic source, has the power to give saving efficacy to sacraments which the Spirit of God alone makes effectual to salvation. That religion of authority, also, and priestly dictation, whereby a man is supposed to become a Christian by believing what the priest tells him to believe, doing what the priest tells him to do, finds no countenance in the truth which our text enforces. If religion is a personal matter, it is impossible to throw the responsibility of possessing or not possessing the character which God requires upon another. In this great concern every man must see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears, believe with his own heart, feel the effects of his own decision and character, and bear his own responsibility. He may relinquish other rights, and abandon other claims, and disclaim other responsibilities if he will; this he can never abandon. God, his Maker and Judge, will hold him to it. None may judge or decide for him, because none can answer for him at the day of final judgment or decision. He may be thrown back upon human authority for any thing but his faith in Christ, and take any thing else upon trust but his personal religion. This is a matter between him and the Savior of men. After all the instruction he can obtain, and the best lights God has given, the question is one which is to

be determined between God and his own soul. There the Savior invites him. To the Searcher of hearts the Bible sends him, with no interposing priest, no interceding saint or Virgin, no ceremonial charm, and no decree of indulgence, penance, or absolution, but naked and alone, to commune with the great High-priest about his own sin and unworthiness, and of the way of life; and there to engage in transactions too full of reality, and peace, and heaven for faith to question, yet too sacred for the eye of man to control or even to inspect.

There, and to these sacred transactions, do these truths invite those who now hear them. They are "glad tidings of great joy to all people." We proclaim to you, beloved hearers, that "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." It is no indefinite theory and no abstract Gospel that we preach. It is blessing; it is the blessing of personal holiness; it is all through Christ, and it is to *every one of you*. Its truths, its pardons, its offered grace, its incarnate Savior, are thus proffered to *every lost sinner* in this sanctuary; nor may he who "has ears to hear" doubt that he has God's warrant for making them his own.

SERMON XIV.

DOING AND BELIEVING.

ROMANS, x., 5-9.—“*For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise: Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above; or, Who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*”

THE great doctrine of salvation by Christ not only fills a wide space in the sacred Writings, but is the sum and substance of their teaching. Simple and beautiful as it is, there are not a few by whom it is not understood. In our intercourse with those whose minds are awake to the importance of personal religion, we not unfrequently have to contend with views far from being clear and distinct on this cardinal doctrine. The text holds up the two ways to eternal life—*doing* and *believing*. Both are good in themselves; but the

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former, to men as sinners, is impossible, while the latter, by the grace of God, is not only possible, but inviting to the vilest sinner in the world. Faith in Christ is every thing in the religion of sinners, and the apostle urges it as every sinner's duty, because it is thus possible and inviting; while for a man already fallen by his iniquity to restore and recover himself to a perfect conformity to the law of God is in itself impossible. No effort of his own, no imparted grace, can enable him to attain such an unblemished and perfect righteousness. The apostle's object in the passage before us is to illustrate and enforce this truth by comparing and contrasting the *impossibility* of salvation by the works of the law with the *obvious and commanded duty of salvation* by faith in Christ. To these two points our attention will now be directed. We remark, then,

I. In the first place, SALVATION BY THE DEEDS OF THE LAW IS IMPOSSIBLE.

The great error of the Jews was, that pardon and acceptance with God are to be attained by their obedience to the law of Moses. They regarded both the ceremonial and the moral law not only as the rule of life, but as the rule of justification. It was "their *own righteousness* which is of the law," in opposition to "the righteousness which is of God by faith." It was a meri-

torious excellence which they acquired by their own works: "Behold, thou art a Jew, and *restest* in the law, and makest thy boast of God." This was the ground of their hope; they considered that they had reason for self-exultation in their obedience to that civil and religious polity by which they were so distinguished above other nations, and expected salvation because they were Jews, "and not sinners of the Gentiles."

This error still exists in our world, and in several classes of persons. Those who hope to be saved because their morality, or religious duties, or deeds of mercy exempt them from righteous condemnation; or because they are not so bad as other men, or as they themselves once were; or because they are members of some visible community which professes to be the only true Church; or because they are more exemplary in their deportment than some professed Christians; as well as those who flatter themselves that they are good enough to come to Christ, and those who stay away from him because they are not good enough to come, do all partake, though in different measures and different ways, of this self-justifying and self-righteous spirit. They all savor of the error that men are justified in the sight of God by the deeds of the law; the ground of their pardon and acceptance is in *themselves*, and in a character and works that are more or

less conformed to the law of God. Obviously there is great delusion in all this. Those who reason thus, and feel thus, have no just conceptions of what the law of God requires. It is a reduced and mitigated law by which they bring their character to the test, and one that makes an indulgent compromise with their own infirmities. They flatter themselves that they conform to the requisitions of the law; but it is not by "bringing up their obedience to the law, but by bringing down the law to their obedience." The true question between them and the law of God they never once look at. They recoil from a close, and earnest, and sustained contemplation of their own character. They are "alive without the law." Their minds are in a state of insensibility to the power and extent of its claims, and the charges and penalties of its broken commandment. Nor is their tranquillity disturbed until "the commandment comes," and conscience is awakened, and the law pursues them with its exactions, reproaches them with their delinquencies, and shows them that they are in the hands of an angry God.

We do not deny that there is in the rightful and equitable jurisdiction of the great Governor and Judge such a legal and moral principle as being justified by the deeds of the law. In theory, this method of justification is clearly recog-

nized in the Scriptures, and is repudiated only because it is irrelevant and impracticable to men as sinners. God nowhere requires men to be justified by law, because such a method of justification is impossible, and he never requires impossibilities. Moses *describeth* "the righteousness which is of the law," "that the man which *doeth* those things shall live by them." It is a legal obedience; a character and conduct which the law requires and justifies. "This do, and thou shalt live." The man who fulfills the law, by performing all that it requires, and abstaining from all that it forbids, is not obnoxious to its penalty. Punitive justice has no claims upon him; he has no sin to be punished or forgiven. He is right and righteous; and, when his Maker enters into judgment with him, the law pronounces him just.

The reason why this juridical justification is irrelevant and impracticable to man is that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Men may work out a righteousness with which they themselves are satisfied, but it is not a righteousness with which God is satisfied. Do what they will, "they are all under sin." There is none righteous, no, not *one*. The charge of sin is substantiated against the race, so that the man now who stands upon his own righteousness must be convicted and condemned. Some men may not

be so bad as others ; but this does not alter the matter only as to the *measure* of their condemnation. **ALL HAVE SINNED.** In this respect, one has no pre-eminence above another. Greek and Jew, bond and free, moral and immoral, virtuous and vicious, penitent and impenitent, Christian and infidel, are all reduced to the abject, humbling level of *transgressors*, that "every mouth may be stopped, and the *whole world* become guilty before God."

Nothing, therefore, can be more obvious than that, *to man, the sinner*, salvation by the deeds of the law is a forlorn hope. The thing is absolutely impossible. Omnipotent grace itself can not make a man who is already a sinner a perfect man in his past history. There is no greater contradiction than that a transgressor of the law can be justified by the law. So far as such a transgressor repents of his transgression and becomes obedient, he does what is right, and what meets his Maker's approbation ; but his repentance makes no atonement for his transgression, nor is it any offset to his disobedience. He is a transgressor, and the law condemns him. He can not now earn God's favor by deserving it. It is too late for him to think of a justifying righteousness in himself ; it is a desperate effort. "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, *who* could stand?" "Enter not into judgment with

thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified!" "As many as are under the law are under the curse." And we repeat the remark that, upon principles of *law*, this condemnation is a fact which it is not within the range of *possible things* to alter. And this is the rhetorical and popular representation of the apostle. Sinning men can no more render an obedience to the law of God by which they can be justified in his sight, than they can scale the heavens, or dive to the bottom of the ocean. Let not the vain imagination enter their thoughts. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? or, Who shall descend into the deep?" They look anxiously and with agony for some ground of hope. But let them not look to the law they have violated. They can not find a refuge there. It is more than God can perform to justify them thus. All things are possible with him save those which imply a contradiction, and things which, if he should perform, he would deny himself. Omnipotence itself can not justify a *sinner* by deeds of law. It is not in the power of all the means of *grace*, nor in the force of truth and energy of prayer, nor in the power of his omnipotent Spirit, to make a *sinner* so holy as to be entitled to pardon and acceptance on the ground of his own goodness. It is both a natural and a moral impossibility—an impossibility which is

absolute, and to be overcome by no power in the universe.

And now, with this impossible method of meritorious justification, the apostle, in the passage before us, contrasts the other method—the method of gratuitous justification by faith in Christ. This brings more distinctly before us,

II. The second position which it is our object to illustrate, which is, that what can not be accomplished by the deeds of the law MAY BE ACCOMPLISHED, IS ACCOMPLISHED BY THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS.

He who came to seek and to save that which was lost, speaks of a very different righteousness, and a very different way of salvation from that which we have seen is thus impossible to fallen men: "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise: Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above; or, Who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead." These are impossible things; but this can not be affirmed of the method of salvation by Christ. There is no such insuperable difficulty in this way of life. Sinners as men are, and trembling, as well they may, under a sense of their disobedience to the law of the holy God, they need not dwell on the impossibility of obtaining pardon and acceptance. Disclosures have

been made, and deeds of righteousness performed, and suffering endured, which, by the divine appointment and procedure, render the transgressor the prisoner of hope, bring the vilest within the reach of mercy, and effectually secure salvation to all true believers. This method of salvation does not require men to perform impossibilities. It is not for them to provide a Savior. It is not for them to bring the Son of God down from heaven, or to raise him up from the dead. It does, indeed, require something, and that something, leaning on all-sufficient grace, the sinner can perform. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is the *word of faith* which we preach—that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." It was the apostle's object to urge the claims of this salvation upon a prompt and hearty acceptance. If we comprehend his illustration, it is that there is *entire simplicity* in this method of salvation; that there is *perfect reasonableness in its revealed conditions*; and that there is *wonderous adaptation* in it to the sinful and polluted character of men. Let us give these three thoughts some distinct consideration.

1. In the first place, there is *entire simplicity* in this way of life. Aside from that great mys-

tery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh," there is nothing it reveals which an ingenuous mind can not understand. It has no duplicity, and no subtlety nor abstruseness. It has not one set of doctrines for the initiated and another for the vulgar; its teachings are all open to the world, and its oracles accessible to all. It is not locked up, and confined to the cloisters of learned and privileged orders of men. "The word is *nigh* thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." It can be perceived, understood, and believed. It is brought before the mind and heart of every man; ministers preach it to their people; parents teach it to their children; teachers inculcate it upon the minds of their pupils. It is not hidden and afar off. It is not interdicted to a son or daughter of Adam.

What, then, is this way of life? I can not state it in simpler language than the following. Every man, as a sinner, has incurred the penalty of God's holy law, and that penalty is eternal death. That law is unchanging and irrevocable, and pursues the transgressor with its denounced penalty. The law knows no mercy, and is simply the assertor and guardian of justice. Simple, unpropitiated pardon has no place in the jurisprudence of mere law. And it has no place in the Gospel of the Son of God. That Gospel reveals the doctrine of pardon, but it is a propi-

tiated pardon through the blood of a satisfying atonement. God hath set forth his Son as this effective propitiation, and laid the sins of men to his charge. He bore them in his own body on the tree. The wrath due to us fell upon him, and the very dregs of it were poured on his guiltless head. He thus satisfied the claims of justice, magnified the law and made it honorable, and, by his own death on the cross, showed that mercy is exalted and justice adorned in the high honors of a vindicated law. He stopped not at canceling the sinner's debt to justice and releasing him from death, but, as the reward of his obedience to the death of the cross, he has a claim of merit, not only to a deed of acquittal for all who believe in him, but a title to the life eternal. "He became sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In fewer words, this way of life rests upon the revealed fact that the righteousness, on the ground of which the transgressor is both pardoned and accepted, is not in himself, but in another. The God only wise, just, and gracious places his own Son in the condition of the guilty, laying upon him the sufferings which they deserve, and imputing to them, or giving them the avails of the obedience which he rendered.

Now we ask, What is there in this way of life

that is unintelligible and mysterious, or that is in any way fitted to mislead an inquiring or perplex an anxious mind? They are not the docile and simple-hearted to whom this way of life appears afar off and inaccessible. To confound the wisdom of men, and that no flesh may glory in his presence, God sometimes hides it from the wise and prudent, and reveals it unto babes. Many a little child has learned it; barbarous and ignorant heathens have learned it. It has often been found and understood by those who have made little advancement in moral science, while it has remained undiscovered by those who boast of their religious privileges and knowledge. Very few things can be so well understood with so little intellectual effort. No man can be deceived in regard to the ground of his acceptance with God without criminal negligence, supercilious self-righteousness, or designing hypocrisy. Nor does any one misunderstand or fall out with it but from unyielding wickedness.

2. The second thought, therefore, specified by the apostle in urging the claims of this way of life, is *the perfect reasonableness of its revealed conditions*. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is the *word of faith* which we preach—that if thou shalt *confess with thy mouth* the Lord Jesus, and shalt *believe in thine heart* that God hath raised him from the

dead, thou shalt be saved." The conditions are not the impracticable conditions of a sinless obedience to the law, but an honest and true faith, and a confession of that faith before men.

There must be an accepted Savior, as well as a provided and an offered Savior. It is not enough that the ground of pardon and life is laid in the perfected work of Christ; that redemption must be *received* by a trusting confidence. When God testifies that he can be just, and the justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus, he must be believed, and his testimony honored. Men must be so persuaded of it as to rest the whole weight of their immortality upon it, and trust in Christ alone for salvation. They themselves must fall in with these revealed conditions and perform this commanded duty, else will this salvation still be far off and inaccessible as the heights of heaven or the depths of the abyss. They have nothing to do as a *work of legal righteousness*, or as adding to or strengthening the foundation of their acceptance which the Son of God has laid in Zion; that sure foundation is laid. But they have this to do in order to become partakers of its benefits, to believe in Christ as the dying, risen, and reigning Savior. It is not by *doing*, but by *believing*, that they lay hold of eternal life. The faith the Gospel requires is the indispensable requisite to a personal interest in that redemption

of which Jesus Christ is the author and finisher. "Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through *faith* in his blood." He is no propitiation except "through *faith* in his blood." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that *believeth* shall be saved." This is a very different thing from "going about to establish our own righteousness by the deeds of the law." The one is the "righteousness of the law," the other is the "righteousness of *faith*;" the former is impossible, there is no impossibility in the latter. Millions, by seeking and taking hold of the divine strength, have thus believed, and millions more will thus believe, to the "glory of his grace who hath made them accepted in the beloved."

The apostle, also, would make this believing *sure*, and therefore he appends to it its appropriate seal. The word of *faith* which he preached was, "that if thou shalt *confess with thy mouth* the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." A man may believe in Christ, and have no opportunity of making any other confession of his *faith* than that which occurs in the frank avowal of it in the chamber of sickness, or in the ordinary intercourse of human life, where the Savior has no congregation of his visible peo-

ple. A man also may believe in Christ, and may so far doubt the genuineness of his faith that he is afraid to make a confession of Christ's name before the world; yet, in all ordinary cases, the Scriptures require as the evidence of a man's faith that he confess the despised Savior before men. They give him no credit for being a believer. They withhold from him the precious hopes, and exceeding great and precious promises made to faith, if he has not the moral courage openly to bear the reproach of his reproached Master and people, and confess him before men. That man's piety is not of the most unquestionable kind who means to keep his religion to himself; or who, because there are responsibilities connected with a public profession which he is reluctant to assume, or because of the scrutiny of an inspecting and fault-finding world which he would gladly avoid — or even because of a secret misgiving as to the genuineness and reality of his faith, satisfies himself with believing in Christ and not confessing him. We do not so read the Scriptures. Their language is, "Whosoever, therefore, shall *confess* me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven." "*Whosoever confesseth* that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." What is to become of the Church of God, and what living witnesses

for Christ would be found in this lost world, if there be no confession of him before men? That men may be believers, and not confessors, would be subversive of one of the great designs of Christianity, if not of Christianity itself. Let no man say he loves Jesus Christ and believes in Jesus Christ if he does not love him enough and believe in him enough to make his love and faith known. Nor let him take hold of the promise, *Thou shalt be saved*, until he believes in his heart and confesses with his mouth the Lord Jesus. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Now we ask, Is there any thing unreasonable in these revealed conditions of salvation? When men complain of them, are they not reproached of their own conscience? They are endued with perception, reason, and conscience. They are emotional beings, and can not but feel the obligation of setting their affections on objects that are worthy, and those which God requires them to love. Every man has the witness in his own bosom of these truths and these obligations. When a man passes from the death of sin to the life of holiness, he is endued with no new faculties. He has a new heart and a new spirit. He has new principles of action, new desires and affections, and new objects of attachment and pur-

suit. God requires him, therefore, not to work out a righteousness by deeds of law, but to repent and believe the Gospel, on pain of eternal death if he refuses, and, if he complies, on the promise of eternal life. These requisitions are made deliberately and in sober earnest. And they are reasonable. God does not require impossibilities. This our text teaches us as plainly as language can teach it. If the sinner replies that he *can not* believe in Christ unless the Spirit of God move him so to do, we rejoin, neither can the saint. The saint has no more power to believe without the Spirit than the sinner; and the sinner has just as much power, without the Spirit, as the saint. They are both alike dependent on a power above them. The difference between the saint and the sinner, in this respect, is that the saint feels his dependence, and the sinner has no deep sense of it at all. The sinner pleads it as his excuse, the saint pleads it as his hope. But their dependence does not vitiate their obligations, nor the reasonableness of their obligations. It is true that "no man *can* serve two masters;" but this is no reason why he should not serve God rather than mammon. That he serves mammon is his sin. The stronger his attachment to his idols, the greater is the obstacle to the service of God; and if that attachment to self and the world is invincible but to almighty

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grace, it only shows the strength of his wickedness. The sinner's inability to a prompt and trusting confidence in Christ is his strong, invincible wickedness, alike demonstrating his absolute dependence on omnipotent grace, his own inexcusable unbelief, and the reasonableness of the revealed conditions of the Gospel. We remark, then,

3. In the third place, *there is wonderful adaptation in this way of life to the sinful character and helplessness of men.* Man is not merely a sinner, but so great and total is his sinfulness that he is by nature destitute of all holiness and desperately wicked. He is not merely diseased; he is sick unto death, and actually "dead in trespasses and sins." He is alive to the claims of the world, of self, of sense, and sin, but dead to the claims of God, holiness, truth, duty, and heaven. This humbling doctrine of the total depravity of human nature underlies all the teachings of the Bible. You can not select a text which inculcates any of the doctrines or duties of the Gospel, which glows with threatenings or is radiant with promises, but assumes, not simply man's unworthiness and ill desert, but his unmingled sinfulness.

Now it must be obvious to every reflecting mind that, retaining such a character as this, no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven, or

even enjoy his Maker's approbation in the present world. It would not be right in itself, but a violation of the rectitude of the divine government, and in opposition to the perfect holiness of the divine nature, which is, and ever must be, utterly repugnant to sin. Hence the Scriptures teach the indispensable necessity of amendment and reform, urge the duty of repentance and personal holiness, and solemnly assure us that, "without holiness, *no man* shall see the Lord." God himself could not make men happy unless they were holy. No deed of acquittal from the condemning sentence of the law, and no title to heaven, could make them happy so long as they remain in the bondage of their corruptions, yield to the instigations of sin, and walk, not after the Spirit, but after the flesh.

If, then, the ground, and the only ground of the sinner's justification is not his own personal righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ singly and alone, the question naturally arises, What more does the sinner need than this imputed goodness, and what more can he desire than to be clothed with this pure robe of the Savior's righteousness? Here we take leave to say that inquiries and thoughts like these originate either in great error, or great ignorance of the Christian redemption. They find their abettors in the antinomianism of the sixteenth century, and in such

writers as Agricola, Crisp, and Richardson, and their refutation in the writings of the Reformers. The believer's justification does not relate to his personal character, but his legal relations. It has respect, not to what he is in himself, but to what he is held to be in the estimation of the law, and by which he is no longer reckoned as a transgressor. It defines simply his legal right, and not his individual and personal holiness. These are two distinct things; the one a personal, the other an imputed righteousness.

But what if it should appear that, although distinct things, and required for distinct and different ends, they are never separated? Such, most certainly, are the teachings of Christ and the apostles. If, as they instruct us, men are justified *by faith* in the righteousness of Christ, they are not justified in their *unbelief* and *ungodliness*. Previous to the time of their believing they are "condemned already, because they believe not on the only-begotten Son of God;" and the moment they *believe*, they enter upon their career of holiness. They are not only justified, and delivered from the burden of their guilt and fears, and have peace with God, and rejoice in hope of his glory, but they enter upon a course of new obedience, maintain and ever and anon renew the conflict with their corruptions, and press onward to the light, and liberty, and holiness of the heavenly

world. Justifying faith is not a nominal thing. It is not the mere assent of the intellect, but the conviction of a willing mind—a conviction that receives the truth in the love of it. It is not the persuasion that I am pardoned and justified; it is “a whole faith in a whole Gospel.” It is the “fruit of the Spirit” and the great element of personal holiness, never existing in the soul alone, but associated with all those graces in the cultivation and maturity of which it becomes meet to be partaker of the inheritance with the saints in light. And thus it is that the justified need more and possess more than an imputed righteousness; the Savior is made to them “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” It is a favorite sentence of Chalmers that “justification is but the means to an end.” The end is progressive sanctification, and the final and perfect transformation of the polluted soul into the image of its Maker. It is the workmanship of God in Jesus Christ, in time and in eternity standing forth alike the purchase of his death and the monument of his wonder-working grace and power.

Such is the adaptation of this way of life to the sinful and polluted character of man. Personal holiness is realized in no other way. Men are holy, the Church is holy, and this poor lost world will become holy only as they enter this

way of life, and walk in his light who is the Lord our righteousness, washed, justified, sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

That influence of the Spirit of God by which the justified are made progressively holy is brought nigh to the unbelieving, as light in the midst of darkness, in weakness their strength, and in despondency their hope and encouragement. There stands the promise, "Seek, and ye shall find." "Then shall ye find me, when you search for me with your whole heart." An honest and an earnest seeking will find and take hold of the strength that is made perfect in weakness. Honest and humble prayer is the ladder that scales the heights and sounds the depths of the divine compassions. It is that link in the chain of the divine arrangements which, if the helpless sinner truly takes hold of, fastens him to the chain, and lifts him from the pit to the throne. There is every adaptation in the Gospel to his wants.

These are some of the thoughts by which the apostle contrasts the righteousness which is of the law with the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ. This is God's way of justifying the ungodly, purifying the impure, encouraging the helpless, and saving the lost.

You have a good excuse, beloved hearers, for

not attempting to work out a righteousness of your own by the deeds of the law, because it can not be done. You can not climb the heavens, nor plunge into the abyss. And, in such a desperate effort, no marvel that you become wearied and heavy-laden, and give it up in despair. This is not the duty to which the Gospel directs you. The Gospel proclaims to you a full and free salvation when it assures you that "*Christ* is the end of the law for righteousness to EVERY ONE that believeth." Yes, EVERY ONE; there is no exception to this offered mercy. That Savior calls upon the "ends of the earth" to look unto him and be saved. "Whosoever will" may take of the water of life freely. If you look down to hell, and ask how you shall escape that fearful doom; if you look up to heaven, and inquire how you shall reach those bright abodes; if you see the multitude and feel the burden of your sins, and ask, Where is there a refuge for such a sinner? the word is nigh thee; there is a ready answer to these inquiries in the precious truth that One there is who "is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." God calls heaven and earth to witness that if you believe in him whom he hath sent you *shall be saved*. If you will not do it, the fault is your own. If you *can not*, it is a criminal *can not*. It does not excuse you. You may not thus "take ad-

vantage of your own wrong," and plead that as an excuse which is the essence of your crime. If, with an all-sufficient and offered atonement before you, and a throne of grace inviting the helpless to seek grace to help in the time of need, any of you perish, it will be because you will "not come unto Christ that you might have life." There is wickedness here that is utterly inexcusable; nor is it any thing but the love of sinning that leads any of you thus to reject the glorious salvation of the Gospel. Oh, dear hearers, by all that is affecting in the instructions of God's Word—by all that is authoritative in the voice that speaketh from heaven—by the love and sorrows of Gethsemane and Calvary, that Savior implores you to take this first step in the way of life. He bids you look to the abyss whence the smoke of the torments of the damned ascends forever and ever, and asks who among you can dwell with devouring fire. He bids you look to the mansions in his Father's house, and inquires if you are content to live and die without the hope of ever dwelling with him. And then he calls you to take one more look at *him* who descended from heaven and hung on the cross; at him who bled for your redemption, and that he might arrest the avenger of blood; at him who, in that dismal hour, bowed to the powers of darkness, that the love of God might burst forth upon

this guilty world. There, on Calvary's bloody top, and with all-beseeching tenderness, he woos you. He asks you to see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow, or any love like his love; and then, with supplicating solicitude, utters the words, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" Let it not be said that this great salvation was brought to your door, and that you would not accept it; that the Spirit of truth and grace walked amid this sanctuary to-day, and hovered around your throbbing heart, and you resisted and repelled the only Comforter; that all things were ready, and you would not come!

SERMON XV.

THE URGENCY OF THE GOSPEL.

MATTHEW, iii., 7.—“*Flee from the wrath to come.*”

“KNOWING the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.” The threatenings and rebukes of the law are the most effectual precursor and pioneer of the Gospel. “The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” The cry for relief must be preceded by the sense of distress. Wherever there is a pressure into the kingdom of God, or even an extensive movement in the minds of men in regard to their spiritual interests, Satan has not a more powerful temptation to young or old than to negligence and sloth in the concerns of the soul. We would fain counteract this ensnaring thought, and, by God’s blessing, induce the doubting and hesitating to halt no longer between two opinions. *Conscience* has fastened the guilt of ungodliness upon them, and, if the voice of the preacher is listened to, the same faithful witness within their bosoms will echo and re-echo there the emphatic and urgent sentence, “*Flee from the wrath to come!*” In order to give our thoughts as much significance as

we can, we shall speak of those to whom this message is specially directed—of the message itself—and of some of the considerations by which it is enforced.

I. We will direct our thoughts, in the first place, to *several distinct classes of persons to whom this message is specially addressed.*

1. We begin by remarking there are those *who make no efforts to escape the danger which threatens them.*

The great mass of men have no just conceptions of this danger, and much less that it relates to a matter which is so near at hand. They are so absorbed in other things that they do not think of it; or they are so hardened in their sins that nothing can awaken them; or the subject itself is so repulsive to them that, when held up to their own minds, they shut their eyes and stop their ears. The most solemn providences—the plainest, the most stirring preaching, does not affect them. Nothing gives an impulse to their inquiries; nothing tells upon their moral lethargy. Though their sinfulness, and their danger, and the way of life by Jesus Christ are made so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err in it, they do not seek to enter. The Spirit of the living God fills the sanctuary where they worship, enters the mansion where they dwell, hovers over the pillow where they sleep,

while they do but resist his calls and grieve him away. Neither the lessons of instruction nor the force of argument—neither the voice of admonition and rebuke, nor the accents of persuasive and melting tenderness, produce either emotion or solicitude. One might almost as well attempt to disturb the tenants of the grave as to rouse such persons to serious effort to flee from the wrath to come. They might consent to become Christians if religion would come upon them without their own seeking, and they could be converted in their dreams; but to consider and reflect—to knock at the door of mercy, and inquire at God's throne if there be any hope for such sinners as they—this they have never thought of. There are also,

2. In the second place, those who, though they are not thus thoughtless and unmoved, *habitually excuse and palliate their neglect of acknowledged duty.*

It is marvelous to see what a little matter serves a man as an excuse for his negligence who does not wish to "break off his iniquity by righteousness, and his transgressions by turning to God." His very excuses condemn him; for he would never think of excusing himself for neglecting the salvation of the Gospel if he did not feel that his conduct required some palliating explanation. Men make very different apologies

for not coming to Jesus Christ that they might have life; but, various, involved, and subtle as they are, they may all be traced to a reluctant and opposing heart. The great object of their excuses is to gain time for impenitence, to lull conscience, and extenuate and defend their love of sinning. These self-satisfying pleas are a sure indication of a hesitating and self-indulgent mind; they are never found in those who are willing to do, or honestly to seek the divine favor to enable them to do, as they ought.

3. A third class of persons to whom our message has a special relevancy consists of those who, *though they intend to escape the wrath to come*, DEFER THIS IMPERATIVE DUTY TO A FUTURE TIME.

They know they have a rational and immortal existence, and that, if they die in their sins, they must lie down in sorrow. Many a time have they resolved to take up the cross and follow Jesus Christ, but they have not been able to bring their minds to this present duty, and put their resolutions into practice. The language in which the Bible addresses them is, "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation;" "*to-day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;" but they are beguiled into the delusion that there will be another and a better season. They do not act thus in the affairs of

the present world; it is only in the affairs of eternity, and in the great question whether they shall be saved or lost. Not a few count on beginning this great work just where it should be left off and consummated, and when they should go to their everlasting rest and crown. I have known persons whose habits of procrastination were so confirmed that it seemed to my own mind that, were the last company on the earth now being associated to enter upon their pilgrimage to the heavenly city, and its gates were sure to be hereafter forever closed, they would say to this last call, "Go thy way for this time."

4. Another class to whom the message in our text may be specially addressed are THOSE WHO SEEM TO HAVE ENTERED UPON THE WAY OF LIFE, BUT HAVE BECOME WEARY AND TURNED BACK.

The work is more difficult than they had anticipated. It seems to them a long and circuitous pilgrimage; they find intricate paths which are difficult to be explored, and a hostile country where there is much to retard their progress. They are weary of the way. There is a sensible abatement of their ardor, and their strength has become weakness. They have not watchfulness, and prayer, and perseverance to go forward. They are like the stony-ground hearers, who for a while receive the word with joy, but when persecution and tribulation come they are offended.

They are like multitudes who followed Christ because they saw his miracles and enjoyed the benefits of his omnipotent power, but who, as soon as they understood his doctrines and what it was to be his followers, "went back, and walked no more with him." They began to seek religion in earnest; became noisy, and bustling, and censorious professors, but in a little while they became weary and dropped the subject. They were never any thing more than almost Christians; and now they linger—stop, it may be—at some intervening resting-place, and return to the world.

5. There is still another class of persons to whom this expostulation is applicable—I mean THOSE WHO LEAVE UNOCCUPIED THE SEASONS OF SPECIAL PROMISE.

There are such seasons in the natural world; and "he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame." There are such seasons in every man's intellectual career, the misimprovement of which can never be compensated, the loss of which can never be made up by subsequent effort. There are such seasons in the business of human life, when the energy and enterprise of a single year accomplishes what no subsequent toil accomplishes in the ordinary pursuits of men.

There are, too, seasons rich in promise to the Church of God and the souls of men. They are seasons when the great work of the soul's salva-

tion is more usually accomplished, and when the kingdom of God is brought nigh. They are *days of youth*, when the strong habits of sinning are not yet formed, when the mind is sensitive and the heart warm, and when, by every tie of duty and of love, the first-born of man's strength belongs to his Maker. They are *days of affliction*, when the sufferer weeps, and pledges himself to God in vows; when the sound of mirth dies upon the ear, and the illusions which sense throws over the pageantry of the world are dispelled. They are days when *God speaks to the soul* by the still small voice of his own Spirit; when the sinner is conscious of something within him strongly urging him to repent and believe the Gospel, and when he can not help saying, "I wish that I was a Christian!" Or they are days when plenteous and abounding grace is descending upon the children of men, and when the clouds return after the rain. They are days when the watered earth is cheered by the summer's sun, and when every valley, and mountain-top, and sacred inclosure of Zion is white unto the harvest. One such week of mercy, one such day of the Son of Man, one such opportunity in his sanctuary, may be worth a whole life that is never distinguished by any of those manifestations of his power and love in which he appears in his glory to build up Zion. To allow such seasons to pass unemployed is to

“crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame;” it is wickedness for which there may be no space for repentance, though sought for carefully and with tears. To hesitate, to linger then, is as if Lot had lingered before the flames of Sodom, and while the angels were urging him out of the city, and saying to him, “Escape for *thy life*; look not behind thee; tarry not in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed!”

Such are the persons to whom the message in our text addresses itself. And now,

II. WHAT IS THE MESSAGE ITSELF?

What is it to flee from the wrath to come? We never feel our responsibility more deeply than when called on to answer this question, and to tell the inquirer with precision what it is he has to do in order to escape the damnation of hell. There are some things which are done *for* him, and *out* of him, and in which he has nothing to do; and there are some things that are done *in* him, which are God's own work. No man flees from the wrath to come without committing to the hands of God his whole interest for time and eternity. It is scarcely possible for us to have too strong impressions of our own weakness, or to trust too implicitly in the exhaustless fullness of God. That is the best religion which is the most conscious of human weakness, and has

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the most confident and affectionate trust in God. In the business of our salvation, he is worthy to be depended on and trusted in as the alpha and omega of the whole. As its original cause, and as its moving and sustaining impulse, the work is taken entirely into his own hands.

Yet, while we say these things, we do not mean to reduce the sinner or the saint to the condition of a mere machine, or to make him merely a passive recipient. The Bible nowhere advocates a dependence that sets aside the use of our faculties, or that excludes any of the active duties, or dispenses with that personal holiness which it is its great object to secure. So far from this, it teaches us that the work which God performs *in* men is itself "to *will* and to *do* of his own good pleasure." They work because God works in them.

"Flee from the wrath to come!" This is the message, and this is just the work the sinner has to do. He is exposed to the wrath of God; it is coming upon him; there is a way of escape, and his business is to *flee* to that only hope. If he asks, How shall I flee? What is the transition by which I am thus to pass from death unto life? What are the footsteps which I must trace from the city of destruction to the celestial city? we have no other answer to this question than that which is given in the Bible, and, though it

is given in different forms, it is throughout the Scriptures substantially the same. Sometimes it is simple repentance; sometimes it is "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;" sometimes it is, "Be ye reconciled to God;" sometimes it is, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return to the Lord;" sometimes it is, "Rend your hearts, and not your garments." The more usual direction in the New Testament is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This embraces all the rest. This is the work God requires and approves. It is thus the sinner makes his entry on the path of life. Christ is not only the way from condemnation to pardon, from sin to holiness, from the coming wrath to the coming glory, but he is the portal to that way. "This is the testimony of God, that he has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Escape from the wrath to come can never be realized in any other way. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." When, in God's name, we say, "Flee from the wrath to come," we call upon men as perishing sinners, men who have a sense of their sin and ruin, to come to Christ in humble and affectionate confidence—to look to him as their Prophet, Priest, and King—to venture their all upon him as the foundation God has laid in Zion—to

make mention of his righteousness; and enter into reconciliation with God through him who died the just for the unjust. This is just what the sinner has to do if he would be saved. He must believe the Gospel, and make the salvation of his soul a real and practical concern. He must receive this message, and act upon it accordingly. This is his work. It is the work of the hour, of the day, of the life. It is the only effectual turning from an irreligious course—the only instant and urgent reformation—the only escape from an unblessed eternity.

When the message is *Plse*, I need not say that the sinner not only has something to do, but must be in earnest in doing it. He must come to the business of his salvation with the most earnest exertions of soul. He must set upon it as the grand care. Until he has found refuge in the Lamb of God, he must have no heart nor mind for any thing else. If God intends to work in him to will and to do, he will bring him thus to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling; and so he will “labor, according to his working, which worketh in him mightily.” He must feel his need of a Savior, see the Lord Jesus to be the very Savior he needs, and make a deliberate choice of Him as all his salvation and all his desire, committing to him every part of his salvation. God would not have him wait till

he is worthy, because the refuge to which he directs him is for the unworthy. He would not have him wait until he is godly, because that refuge is open to the ungodly and the sinner. He would not have him come with any price in his hands, but come without money and without price; nor would he have him wait until he is fit to come, but because he is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." No, no; he would not have him *wait at all*, but points to the coming wrath, and bids him *flee*.

I proceed, then,

III. To suggest SOME OF THE CONSIDERATIONS BY WHICH THIS MESSAGE IS ENFORCED.

1. The first is *the work itself which is to be performed*.

It is to *flee* from the wrath; to come to him alone who saves from that wrath. It is to abandon every other refuge, to renounce every other confidence, and to receive this whole salvation, in all its holiness and hopes, as God's salvation and all of grace.

To do this is not the ineffectual effort of a stupine and slothful mind; there are divine prerogatives to be honored by it, and divine claims to be admitted, which are never honored and never admitted without serious thought. Imputations of sinfulness and ill-desert are to be submitted to in doing it, and threatenings to be justified against

which the carnal heart rebels. Excuses are to be thrown away, false confidences rejected, idols sacrificed, sins forsaken, strong and endeared ties, it may be, to be broken, and trials to be encountered. Every thing must be forsaken for Christ, and the soul lie prostrate at the feet of sovereign mercy, forever ascribing to God alone all the praise of its salvation. These are deliberate and serious acts, and they must be persevered in up to the gates of the heavenly city. To neglect them needs no effort. There is no need of thought and activity if a man would shun this important duty. If he flees from the wrath to come, and lays hold of eternal life, it is under no feeble and slight impression of truth and duty. He must take an interest in the work as the great battle of human life; it must not only be begun, but never lost sight of. Nothing must take the place of it, nothing interfere with it. He must *labor* to enter into that rest.

2. Another reason for this urgency is *the shortness of the time in which this important work is to be accomplished.*

The whole of human life, even to its threescore years and ten, is but an "hand-breadth, a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." But not unfrequently this great work is crowded into the brief and giddy years of childhood, and all beyond is the slumber of the grave.

If extended into youth, it is embarrassed by vain imaginations, by ardent passions, and by those ambitious views which give the claims of the Gospel but a secondary place, and then it terminates in those abodes of darkness and silence where the light of mercy never shines, and its heavenly voice is not heard. Or if it is extended into the mid-day of human life or to old age, it is "soon cut off and flies away."

The greater portion of the earthly existence of this congregation is even now measured out and gone. However these golden years may have been misemployed, and however deep the regret that they have been thrown away, no sorrow for the past, no diligence for the future, no prayers nor tears can restore them. Nor is the day of grace always extended to the entire course of human life. There is a period in the life of thousands which limits the divine forbearance, and beyond which the sinner's condition is as truly hopeless as though he were sleeping in the chambers of the dead! What if the sentence is gone forth that, even as they "did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind!" what if abused privileges are diminished, and "from him that hath not is taken away even that which he hath!" what if the lamentation has been uttered by him who says, "My Spirit shall *not always* strive with man!"

"Oh, that thou hadst known, even thou, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hidden from thine eyes." (We know not where this line of demarkation is drawn, and only know that where the last call of mercy is rejected, there is as truly "the sin unto death" as though the heedless and insensate sinner had "blasphemed the Holy Ghost.")

And will men remain profoundly sunk in spiritual lethargy, and talk of days and years of mercy yet to come, who, it may be, are now extinguishing those last "lingering sensibilities" which, once extinguished, leave them in hopeless obduracy and darkness? Will they still count rising and setting suns, foretell mornings that shall dawn, and evenings that shall shut in, before the last rays of life have departed? Oh, is it for man, "whose days are as grass, and as the flower of the field," to be thus presumptuous? Shall he stand on the brink of the grave, and yet be prodigal of time? Shall he be treading on the borders of eternity, and be counting days and years yet to come? Deceived man! miserable man! will he never break the spell of such infatuation? Beloved hearers, you have no security for another hour. At best they are but a few fleeting years, and not one of this assembly will remain alive. And these years you will find but a short winter's day, and that day a dream.

13. Another reason for the urgency of this message is found in the *freshness and urgency of the Gospel itself*. There is great salvation provided in the Gospel, to which guilty and lost men are made welcome, and effected by nothing short of the agonies and death of the Son of God. It is every way suited to the sinner's character and wants; delivers from sin and hell, and introduces those who accept it to a state of perfect holiness and everlasting joy. Its Author has commanded that it be preached to "every creature," and the unembarrassed offer of it is made to all who "have ears to hear." Its invitations are frank and open, honest and sincere, and of the most pressing and urgent kind. Its language is, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "The Spirit and the Bride say: Come; and let him that heareth say Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Even where it is rejected, those who bear its messages are required to go and "compel men to come in," that the banquet may be filled with guests. The most urgent language is put into their lips; and they are directed to "beseech men," as though it were God himself who thus entreated them: "to become reconciled to him." God himself, from his high and holy place, utters the entreaty:

"Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die;" and from his exalted throne calls upon "all the ends of the earth to look to him and be saved." Every being in heaven, and every virtuous and holy being on the earth, feels a deep interest in their welfare. The angels of light are executing these purposes of love, waiting to serve them, and actually ministering to them. Parents are engaged in instructing and counseling them; the Church labors and prays for them; while those who have just escaped the city of destruction, and entered on their heavenward pilgrimage, cease not to say, "Come, go with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." God's Word expostulates with them; Sabbaths urge them with unwonted solemnity; and God's sanctuary, by all the tenderness of its ordinances, with unwearied assiduity, pleads with them to turn and live. But, above all, that adorable and ever-blessed Savior, who bled on Calvary, and who is still employed in extending the boundaries of his kingdom in this revolted world, is making known to them his love and mercy, keeping open the door of hope, and interceding for them, while angry justice is making its sword ready to cut them down as cumberers of the ground. And do not these urge the message, "Flee from the wrath to come?" Is not this their object and their business, and do they not bring the message

directly home to the bosoms of all who are yet in their sins? Do they not plead with you in God's name, and in God's behalf, to come into the ark?

4. The last reason for the urgency of this message is of a different kind, and holds a prominent place in the language of the message itself—it is *the coming wrath*.

Men *must* flee, or endure its woes. It is the wrath of God; and who "can abide the day of his coming?" and who "can stand when he appeareth?" It is the wrath of God against all *the ungodliness of men*, accumulated by their accumulated wickedness, aggravated by their contempt of his mercy, measured by their ill desert. Oh, what a world of tormenting agony will that be, where men must endure that wrath of God up to the full recompense of their sins! *One* sin hurried the rebel angels into the lake of fire, and there they are "reserved in chains unto the judgment of the great day." Yet memory can not now recall one thousandth part of the sins which the ungodly have committed. I beg the thoughtless and delaying sinner just to think what a scene of suffering and despair must that present where all the wicked, of every age and clime, are gathered together—where Satan reigns, and every sin and evil passion are not only perpetuated, but put on their new and dreadful forms—

where God is angry, and where he is present only to show his anger, and "make his power known" by upholding in existence and in suffering the worm that never dies.

This is the fearful thought, that it is *everlasting* wrath. Disbelieve it who will, scoff who will at it now, it will be found a dread reality. There will be no revocation of the sentence; "Depart from me, ye cursed, into *everlasting* fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" Their worm *dieth not*, and the "fire is *not quenched*." Their "*end* is destruction;" their "*end* is to be burned." Not to be redeemed, and ultimately restored; for, if it were so, "however long they might suffer in hell, their *beginning* would be destruction, and their end salvation."

I need no farther evidence of this truth than the two great lessons read from Calvary. The Son of God there bled and died to convince the universe that, while believing sinners are pardoned, the penalty of the law is not repealed, but will infallibly be executed on all the impenitent and unbelieving. He suffered and died not more certainly to show that God is merciful than that he is just. His awful justice appears in nothing more than in the severity of the punishment inflicted on his Son when he took the sinner's place. Go and stand by that cross, and there learn that "if these things be done in the great

tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Never was the punishment of the ungodly more loudly proclaimed than here.

There is, therefore, a most emphatic import in the words, "*The wrath to come*." It was the *wrath to come* eighteen hundred years ago, and, though it has been burning from that day to this, still it is the *wrath to come*. It was the wrath to come to Sodom and Gomorrah, to Assyria and Babylon, Greece and Rome, and all the nations that forgot God, and, though they have been in hell for centuries, it is still the *wrath to come*. It will burn on to the judgment day, and still it will be the *wrath to come*. Century after century, and millennium after millennium, it will still be burning, and will still remain *the wrath to come*. Time will come to its close, and every living thing on the face of the earth will disappear from it; but the period will never come, even in that distant eternity, when the wrath that is past will bear any proportion to that which is *to come*. Myriads and myriads of ages hence it will be the *wrath to come*, and the smoke of the torments will ascend forever and ever! *The wrath to come*—oh, what a thought is that! It outstretches—overwhelms the comprehension of men. We may call up all the images of horror and crime which our imagination can conceive—we may picture to ourselves its alarms and its despair—we may

add to it one round of ages after another as we would a drop to the ocean or a pebble to the sea-shore, yet the most we can say of it is that it is *the wrath to come*.

Will ye, then, who are born for immortality, *flee* from the coming wrath, or will ye linger out an unending existence in its flames? Oh, tell me, will you run the hazard of the "bottomless pit?" Will you provoke that edict of eternal reprobation, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth?" Immortal men! is there no other inheritance for you than this? Must these deathless souls sink into that unmeasured, unmeasurable abyss? Will you not flee from these depths of hell? And when will you flee? You have not time for another Sabbath. Will you not let this concern lay with great weight upon your mind, as you sit here before God, as you leave these courts, as you this night lay your head upon your pillow? If you are not afraid to be alone, will you not go alone and think of it? If the voice should meet you there, "Who hath warned *you* to flee from the wrath to come?" it will be the Spirit's voice, and show that you are not beyond the reach of his expostulations. He is here to-day to tell you when to flee, and *how* to flee, and *where* to flee from the wrath to come. He has told you already, and is

again telling you of him who is "a hiding-place from the storm, a covert from the tempest." This is thy refuge, oh thou guilty and trembling! Make the sentiment thine own, and say,

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God! I come, I come."

It was stupendous humiliation from the Father's bosom to the accursed cross, but it was all for love of thee. He took thy nature, that thou mightest become partaker of his; thy shame, that thou mightest inherit his glory; thy agony and curse, that thou mightest enter into his joy, and reflect the lustre of his crown. Flee, then, from the coming wrath to him. It will be a bitter lamentation at last to exclaim, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved." No deeper reproach, no reflection more painful this side the regions of despair, will ever be realized than that which is forced upon the unrepenting as he one day looks back upon opportunity once enjoyed, hopes once cherished, but lost—beyond recovery lost! In a few days, every soul in this assembly will be in heaven or in hell. What, then, means this indifference? Whence this madness? Distracted sinner, why will you thus rush by the cross of Calvary, and plunge into eternal burnings?

I have done; I leave you to think of these solemn truths. I would not that your blood be required at my hands. When these lips are cold in death, remember that I ceased not to warn you to flee from the wrath to come.

SERMON XVI.

PRESENT OBEDIENCE.

JOHN, xiii., 37.—“*Lord, why can I not follow thee now?*”

THIS day of grace is so uncertain, and at best so short, that it must not excite surprise if we frequently present to your consideration the importance of personal religion. Our object in preaching the Gospel, though sometimes requiring a wider range of thought, is not gained unless, by thus endeavoring to interest your minds in more enlarged views of God's truth, we prepare the way more directly to urge the claims of Jesus Christ upon your hearts. It will avail you nothing to know the truth of God if you do not do his will. It is in vain for any man to shut his eyes to the importance of a personal interest in the salvation of the Gospel. The subject is one which *must* be thought of, and which *will* sooner or later come home to his own bosom. Every man has a deathless soul, and is accountable to God, his Maker and Judge. Every man is a sinner, and well knows that God can not connive at the transgression of his law. The Gospel of Christ opens before him the only door of hope;

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there is this one, and but this one way of escape from the coming wrath. The question, therefore, is a serious one, Have you truly received this Gospel? It may be that the honest answer to this inquiry, from some who hear me, is that, in the midst of light, and admonitions, and inviting mercy, they have neglected the great salvation. And *why* have you neglected it? Why do you neglect it still? How long do you mean to neglect it? You can not think, perhaps, of becoming truly religious, *to-day*. You mean to defer the subject for the present. But why must you defer it? *Why can you not follow Christ now?* Weigh this matter well. There are two serious considerations which here present themselves. The first is, What is it to follow Christ? The second is, What are your reasons for not following him now?

I. In the first place, *What is it to follow Christ?*

To follow Christ involves the substance of Christian piety. When the apostle says, "Be *followers* of God as dear children," he means that we should possess the character of the children of God. When the Savior says, "Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross and *follow* me, he can not be my disciple," he means that there is no true religion without receiving the truth he reveals, imbibing the spirit he inculcates, and practicing the duties he enjoins. To follow Christ is, therefore,

1. In the first place, to *believe in his name*. Men are not by nature believers in Christ. They are not believers in him because they are born in a Christian land—nor because they have descended from Christian parents—nor because they have received Christian baptism—nor because they have been early taught the truths of the Christian religion—nor because they have been restrained from outward vices, and their external character is without reproach. They may be all this, and reject Jesus of Nazareth as the only and all-sufficient Savior of men. To follow him they must abandon this unbelief, and receive the testimony which God has given concerning his Son. They have the Bible in their hands; they know the claims of Christ as the only Savior; and, if they are his followers, they receive the truth concerning him in the love of it. Their views of their own sinfulness, unworthiness, and ill desert make them feel their need of Christ; and the just condemnation of God's holy law that has gone out against them shows them that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified. They see that the only resort that remains to them is the finished work of this glorious and accepted Mediator. And they repair to it with hope and confidence. They are satisfied that there is a way in which God can be honored and glorified in rescuing them from the power and wages of sin, and

in making over to them eternal life as the gift of his grace. They receive this truth, and rejoice in it, and thus make this Savior and this salvation their own.

2. In the second place, to follow Christ is *faithfully to do his will*. The authority of Christ is identified with the authority of his Father—his commands are the same as the commands of God. He is the great advocate and expositor of these commands; he died to honor them, and he lives to enforce a practical obedience to them. "Then are ye my disciples," says he, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." All his followers cheerfully acknowledge him as the Lawgiver of the universe. They do not merely trust in his grace, but submit to his authority. His living example, however they may fall short of it, is *their* example. The Christian graces and the moral virtues which he illustrated and requires are those which they confess themselves bound to imitate, and to hold their obedience steadfast unto the end. It is not that they may sin with impunity that they trust in him. It is inconsistent with their belief in him to presume that they may sin because his grace abounds. This is not their character, nor the state of their minds. The love of God and man, the humility and self-denial, the truth and integrity, the exemplary observance of all the divine institutions, the subjugation of all

they have and are to God's will and glory, the uniformity and excellence of the Christian character—these are what they aim at in following Christ. Whatever the yoke be which this kind and lowly Savior lays upon them, they would bear it cheerfully. Wherever his providence, his word, and he himself lead the way, they follow him. No matter what the duties may be, nor through what trials and reproaches, him they follow. I add,

3. In the third place, to follow Christ is to *make a profession of his religion before the world*. Since the time when Jesus Christ first called his twelve apostles, he has been collecting a society from among the sons and daughters of men, who are not ashamed to bear their Master's name, and publicly avow themselves his disciples and followers. Men naturally associate with those they love; and, where the cause and object are of sufficient importance to demand it, they associate under the same standard, and bind themselves to the same leaders. The character, the cause, and the command of Christ require this association of all his followers. It is his will that they should thus come out from the world, and become his open and avowed friends, and the open and avowed abettors of his truth and cause among men. He has gone so far in his instructions on this subject as to say, "If any man is ashamed of

me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he shall come in the glory of his Father and of the holy angels." Men may flatter themselves that they may be the followers of Christ without *professing* to follow him; but Christ himself nowhere says this. We will not say that no person is his follower who does not openly profess to be so, because all his followers may not have the opportunity of making that profession—because, from the prejudices of education, there may be those whose minds are not enlightened in regard to this obvious duty—because there may be some who regard a Christian profession as a profession of sinless rectitude—and because, from unjustifiable scruples, and other causes than disaffection to Christ, and being *ashamed* of him and his words, they hesitate at making such a profession. For the most part, this hesitation arises from a hesitating attachment to him, from an inward reluctance to be known as his followers, and from a secret revolting of heart to the obligations of the Christian profession. And this is the spirit which Christ rebukes; and which is inconsistent with being at heart his followers. He claims every man's *influence*; he solicits the influence of his *enrolled name* and his personal presence at the ordinances which show forth the realities of Christianity; and are the standing memorials of his praisewor-

thy love. If thou "believe in thy heart the Lord Jesus, and *confess with thy mouth* that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be *saved*." There is a spurious faith; but it is less likely to be spurious where it results in a deliberate and open avowal of its principles and attachments. There may be a presumptuous faith; but it is less likely to be presumptuous where it is obedient to the command, "This do in remembrance of me." A public profession of the religion of Christ before the world, except in those corrupt churches which teach that the form of godliness is enough without the power, is the safest protection against a spurious religion which could have been devised. Men must disavow other systems and profess the Gospel if they would be Christ's followers. They must disown other masters and own *him*. They must break with wealth, with fashion, and every form of worldly association, if it is necessary to do so, and bear the shame of becoming the unblushing followers of Jesus. He does not seek secret, retired, unknown followers, but a frank, and noble-hearted, and outspoken Christianity, that will openly live and die for him. Nor is there any thing unbecoming in this, or inconsistent with the quietness and spirituality of the Christian character. It is not required of us to make a parade of godliness—to proclaim our religion from the house-tops, and boast of

our discipleship, either for the sake of exciting the admiration or the reproach of men. But it is required of us to act it out, and with becoming modesty, humility, and firmness to follow Christ openly and in face of the world.

Having thus showed what it is to follow Christ, we proceed,

II. In the second place, to ask you, *What are your reasons for not following him now?*

Why should any hesitate, and delay, and halt between two opinions in a matter like this? What are your reasons for procrastination? or what apology is there in your age, your circumstances, or character? What secular plans have you yet to accomplish, what advisers to consult, what difficulties to be removed, in order to justify you in forsaking all and following Christ? What are the discouragements which lie in your way, and what are the obstacles you have to surmount? What is it which, with such artifice and power, keeps you from following the Savior? Why do you ask time for deliberation, and opportunity to examine and investigate, before you commit yourself as Christ's disciple?

1. Is it, in the first place, that you have any doubt about its being your *immediate duty* to follow him? How can you doubt this when Christ commands it? Is it not enough to settle this question that he says to every one within the

sound of the Gospel, "Follow thou me?" The simple question is whether the command of Christ ought to be promptly and implicitly obeyed. There may be difficulties in your outward condition; there may be hesitation in your own mind; your heart may be hard and sinful; you may be called to the sacrifice of feeling and interest; you may doubt whether you are a Christian, and shrink from the duties of the Christian character and profession; but what do all these suggestions amount to, and how light and powerless they are when weighed against the heavy and potent command of Jesus Christ? You are not gaining any thing by delay. Instead of being diminished, every difficulty is increased by this spirit of procrastination. When Christ calls upon men to follow him, they have nothing to do with difficulties. He knows the difficulties, but requires them to follow him. When he was on the earth, he once commanded a stranger to follow him, and the man replied that he would follow him after he had first gone and bid farewell to those of his father's house. It seems a reasonable request; but the Savior's reply was, "Follow me." Another, who received the same command, requested that he might first go and bury his father, and to him Christ replied, "Let the dead bury their dead; *follow thou me.*" These are strong cases; and they are recorded in order to teach us that

nothing can be pleaded as an excuse for not at once following Christ. Following him is the first duty; and not only does it not interfere with any other duty, but no other duty can be right-fully performed except as it is done with a Christian spirit. Christ now calls upon you to follow him; he may not call again; this may be the last opportunity either of obeying or disobeying his call. All his commands are of present force and obligation. He issues no command to-day to be obeyed to-morrow. Every day, hour, and moment has its fitting command and duty. And it is the *present* day, and hour, and moment in which you have the deepest interest. The *present* is every thing with God. "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation." Take heed how you trifle with him. Angels bow, and devils tremble in his presence. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh from heaven. Why can you not follow him now?

2. Is it, in the second place, *that the duty to which he calls you is in itself unreasonable?* What is that duty but to believe in him, to do his will and trust in his redemption, and to make an open avowal of these things before the world? And in whom can you confide if not in Christ? What other sacrifice for sin is there except his great propitiation? Whose instructions are so reasonable, and so unspeakably interesting and

important, as his? Where is there in the universe rectitude so inviolable and pure, power so omnipotent, wisdom so unerring, grace so abounding as his? Who else has called forth the powers of heaven and earth to establish his authority and doctrine? Whose yoke is so easy, and whose burden is so light as his? Whose commandments are not grievous, but joyous, and fruitful in righteousness and peace, if not his? Who deserves the honor of your professed attachment, if not he, and whose cause deserves your patronage, if not his? What paths has he trodden that are not right, and safe, and honorable to walk in; and whither has he gone that, with an enlightened conscience and an honest heart, you may not follow him? Do not allow the impious and infidel thought that he requires any thing unreasonable when he calls upon you to become a Christian, and a professed Christian. Unreasonable to follow Christ! Who says this, and where did this black suspicion originate? Unreasonable to be the avowed disciple of him who came to seek and save that which is lost! What a thought! The wickedest man in the world would scarcely be willing to say that this is an unreasonable service. Unreasonable to become the pupil of this divine Teacher, who is full of grace and truth! Unreasonable to become the patient of that heavenly Physician, who never visited the sick or the

afflicted without healing and comforting them, and to touch the hem of whose garment is to be made whole! Unreasonable to be the subject of that Prince who every where makes known to the rebellious the treaty of peace and reconciliation! Unreasonable to become the restored and protected wanderer from his flock, who, as the storm approaches, would gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings! Unreasonable to enlist under the banner of his love, who drank the bitter cup in the garden; who emptied it to the dregs on the cross; who groaned there in the agony of his soul, the just for the unjust, and bore your sins in his own body on the tree, and prayed for you there, though you were his enemies! *Whose* is the unreasonableness, if not *yours*, who refuse to follow him? If you do not love him, trust him who has done so much for you; if your hearts beat not for him, and your lips do not make mention of his name, and your lives are not an habitual expression of your devotement to him, it is because conscience is betrayed, and reason has forsaken its throne, and folly and madness are in your hearts.

And if you are constrained to allow that his claims *are reasonable*, then must you lay your hand upon your mouth, and confess that you are without excuse for not following him *now*. This concession draws deep, and shows that you should

follow him decidedly, and not trifle with his injunctions by delay.

3. Is it, then, in the third place, *because the presence and grace of Jesus Christ are not sufficient to encourage and support you*, that you do not follow him now? Is it not enough that, if you follow *Him*, you have the *promise* of his encouragement and support, and that wherever you go, and whatever responsibilities and burdens are laid upon you, and whatever you suffer, his presence will go with you, and be your perpetual joy? Has he not told you of that throne where you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need? Has he not said, "My grace is sufficient for thee?" Does he not give you the assurance, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee?" When your own wicked hearts superinduce a feeling of despondency, and you are conscious that you can, of yourself, do nothing, does he not remind you that his strength is made perfect in your weakness? When you see your lost condition most clearly, and feel the power and burden of your sins the most deeply; when you are most sensible that you are without excuse, and are ready to confess that there is nothing but your hesitating and reluctant heart that keeps you from taking up your cross and following Christ; when it seems to you that you would give all the world to make your peace with God,

and become Christians, do you not hear him say, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest?" When the things of time and sense have lost their interest with you, and all your anxiety is about the salvation of your souls; when you have become wearied and depressed in going about to establish your own righteousness, and, after laboring and toiling in vain to make yourself better, are ready to sink in despair, did he never remind you of those cheering words, "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, *will hear them*; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." Man's extremity is God's opportunity. What refreshing streams of mercy come gushing in upon the soul when drought, and barrenness, and death threaten it, and it finds no rest day nor night, and the presence, the promise, and the grace of Christ are like overflowing fountains? And they are *present* helpers. They rebuke the sinner's weakness, and impotence, and fears, and despondency, and unbelief. They bid him be strong—yea, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and no longer hesitate to follow him.

4. Is it, then, in the fourth place, the reason

you do not follow him now, that *you fear you shall not hold out to the end?* There is no doubt many fall of entering the kingdom of God because they do not persevere to the last. They are seriously impressed for the moment, and soon lose these impressions. They are solemn amid solemn scenes, and affected under an affecting and urgent discourse, and then go away and forget what manner of men they were. They struggle with their emotions a while, and then dismiss them altogether. They seek religion for a time, and then drop the unwelcome subject, and turn back to the world. *You* are afraid that, if you follow Christ now, your present views may be changed—that you may lose this tenderness and concern, return to your former carelessness, and not only bring reproach upon the name of Christ, but make your last state worse than the first. You are ready to ask yourself, When sacrifices are demanded of me, shall I be willing to make them? When, peradventure, I may be the loser by my religion, shall I consent to be the loser? When the world allures, shall I repel its allurements? When foes oppose me, and dangers threaten, shall I shrink from the conflict and betray my Lord? I am afraid I shall prove faithless, and show myself a cowardly traitor. Blessed fears! “Happy is the man that feareth always!” Well you may be in habitual fear of of-

fending God, of dishonoring God, of dishonoring religion, of grieving God's people, and of becoming a stumbling-block to those that are without. If you feel as you ought, you *will* be afraid of all these things. You will watch over your treacherous hearts, lest this world bring you into bondage, and you forsake the Lord your God. God will make use of your fears as safeguards from evil. They will keep your mind awake, and your conscience tender, and render you the more alert in throwing your armor about you. They will lead you to value the petition, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." They will urge you to cry, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe!" They will fit you for duty and for trials. They will have a happy tendency to make you grow in grace and in usefulness, and to press onward to the prize. They will even make you happier Christians than though you felt no such hallowed restraints, and lost all watch and guard over your own hearts. It is the self-confident and presumptuous who are fearless. It is only when these fears induce neglect of *present duty* that they are ungodly fears. You may have a full conviction that, if you follow Christ, he will take care of you. You may, perhaps, lose sight of him, but he will not lose sight of you. You may trust yourself in his hands. If he calls you to severe tests of your piety, what right have you

to limit his faithfulness, and to say that you shall not be enabled to endure them? If he calls you to trials that you can not foresee, how do you know that you shall not "take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for his sake?" Hope, then, in God. Cheerful hope, and trust, and godly fear will carry you through. Christ the Conqueror will carry you through. You have but to go forth in the footsteps of his flock and *follow him*. He will guide you by his counsel, and afterward receive you to glory. His course in this world is finished, and those who follow him shall be with him where he is. How much longer he will detain you on this low earth he has not told you. Your present duty is to follow him here, and follow him now. Whither he has gone we know, and the way we know. Let us follow him here, and we may have the assurance that we shall follow him there, and not only be with him where he is, but behold his glory, even the glory he had with the Father before the world was.

Do not hesitate, my dear hearers. If any favorable and truthful impression has been made on your minds by these remarks, let this be the last hour of hesitation and delay, the last invitation to Jesus Christ and his great festival of love which you trifle with. Beware of the effort to make yourselves better before you come to Christ.

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Beware of looking for a better state of mind, lest you find within you a heart more worldly and stubborn than ever. Beware lest you grieve the Spirit of God, and he leave you to follow other ways than that which leads to Christ, to his table, and to the heaven where he reigns. Beware lest, while you ~~hesitate~~, he decides that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of his supper. Beware lest, while you ~~hesitate~~, this vapor-
 ing life vanishes away, and from the ensnar-
 ing scenes which have so long kept you away
 from Christ, you are unexpectedly summoned to
 eternity. Christ's message to you now is, "Fol-
 low me." Not a few among you have heard and
 will obey the call. And where is the man or
 woman, old or young, who is secretly saying, "I
 pray thee, have me excused?" *Excused!* what
 excused? Excused from accepting the glorious
 Gospel of the ever-blessed God? *Excused* from
 entertaining his only Son, and from the enter-
 tainment of his infinite love! *Excused* from en-
 tering the mansions which he has prepared for
 those who love and follow him! Tell me, do you
 wish to be excused? Go, then, and follow your
 adorable Master. Salute no man by the way.
 Follow him now.

SERMON XVII.

CHRISTIAN ADORNMENT.

TITUS, ii., 10.—“*That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.*”

THE first object of the Gospel is to make men Christians, then to make them ornaments of Christianity. No disciple of the New Testament, much less any Christian of sound practical wisdom, is satisfied with simply religion enough to secure him from reproach, and save him from perdition. The aim, and tendency, and whole scope of the Savior's teaching look higher than this. He was wont to say to his disciples, “Ye are the light of the world;” “ye are the salt of the earth;” “herein is my Father glorified, that ye bare *much* fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” Such is the thought expressed in the text. The Apostle Paul, in giving his own son in the faith some seasonable counsels in relation to his official work, exhorts him to such a course of religious instruction as shall secure the honor and promote the adornment of the Christian character. This obligation rests upon all Christians, irrespective of their age and station in society; this is the

high calling of the aged and the young, the rich and the poor, ministers and their people. This apostle would have his young friend Titus so preach and so exemplify his teaching, that "the aged men" and "the aged women," the "young women," the "young men," and "the servants," should be instructed and induced to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." Yes, in *all things*—in all the graces of the Christian character, and in all the departments of Christian duty. How, my Christian brethren, shall this be accomplished, and in what way shall we ourselves make this desirable and beautiful attainment? In replying to this inquiry,

I. We observe, in the first place, that, to adorn the divine teaching, it is necessary to *understand it*.

"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth"—this is the model Christianity. Ignorance of the Gospel is not the way to adorn it. It is true that knowledge is not piety: "Though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have not charity, we are nothing." Yet ignorance is not the mother of devotion, nor can there be any true piety where there is no true knowledge of God. "This is life eternal," says the Savior, "that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast

sent." God's truth is the standard of holiness; and though it may be known where it is not obeyed, it is impossible it should be obeyed where it is not known. In describing the character of a reprobate generation, the prophet declares, "They are a people of no *understanding*; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, he that formed them will show them no favor." The faith of the Gospel is an enlightened faith, and the devotement it secures is a reasonable service. The Christian character is formed not by a compliance with the traditions of men, nor by a blind submission to any form of human authority; it stands firm, and in all its inherent and high-born beauty, only when it "stands in the wisdom of God." It is the strength and beauty of a good man's character that he is able to "give a reason of the hope that is in him with meekness and fear." Grace adorns knowledge, and knowledge is the adornment of grace. Of the bright days that are yet to dawn with such splendor on the Church of God, it is predicted that "knowledge, with strength of salvation, shall be the stability of her times." When the teachings of the Gospel shall so recommend themselves to its professed disciples as to become inmingled with their habits of thinking; when, instead of furnishing the subjects of bold and curious speculation and sharp controversy, they furnish the

refreshing aliment of the soul, and we love to recollect them, and talk "of them when we are sitting in the house, and when we are walking by the way, when we lie down and when we rise up," they become those high and holy meditations which, while they enlighten, elevate, and while they elevate, purify, and while they purify, give the Christian character a beauty which it is difficult for its enemies to gainsay or resist.

It may not be out of place for us to ask ourselves whether or not we thus "adorn the doctrines of God our Savior," and whether or not that knowledge of God's truth which first shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, remains limited and indistinct, or is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day? It is by a growing acquaintance with God's truth that we shall attain a growing acquaintance with ourselves, with our manifold defects and imperfections, and our need of higher attainments in the divine life. The Christian character can not receive the most vivid and weighty impulses to holiness except from those rich and powerful considerations that are derived from the pure truths of the Gospel, and set home by the Spirit of God. The adorable Savior himself is but the embodiment of his own precious truth. He is our light, our life, our strength, our beauty. He is

the vine, we are the branches. It is through his truth and grace that we abide in him and he abides in us. The religious world is full of errors, and it is with concern that we look upon the indifference to God's truth that is found in many of the professed followers of the Son of God. How little is the Word of God read and studied! How little are its doctrines, and spirit, and precepts understood! Multitudes at the present day are more concerned to acquaint themselves with the varied literature of the Bible than with its beautiful and weighty truths. With what listlessness and inattention is it read and heard compared with volumes of infinitely less importance! It can not be expected that Christians will adorn the doctrine of God their Savior so long as they know little of its teaching.

II. We remark, in the second place, that, in order to adorn the doctrine of Christ, we must *possess the spirit of Christ*.

We read of those who, "having the form of godliness, deny the power thereof." There are religions in the world which seem to require nothing more than form. The festivals in honor of heathen gods, and the worship of their altars, are forms; yet not so much forms of *godliness* as *vicious* forms. Their most meritorious acts of devotion are the external rites of bathing in sacred rivers, and the vain-glorious and fool-

hardy inflictions of self-torture. The forms of the Church of Rome and of the Greek Church constitute so essential a part of their religion that not a few of their religious teachers deny the necessity of any thing more. Nor are all Protestants free from this delusion. Many a person is satisfied with the name of Churchman, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, who is not only ignorant of the peculiarities of the Church to which he belongs, but is utterly regardless of its spirit. Wherever you find men reprobating a spiritual religion, and finding fault with those who profess to be religious at heart; men who ridicule the doctrine of conversion and the Spirit's influences—who make light of sin and of the work of Christ—who quiet their consciences by setting a mark upon the failures of those who have more religion than themselves, you may rest satisfied that, though they have a name to live, they are dead.

We should never forget that there is a spirit and power in vital piety without which no form will profit us. "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." No outward form can answer the description of a renewed nature, as given in the Scriptures. Outward forms can not move the soul as the Spirit of God moves it in view of the revealed realities of the spiritual world. The

spirit of the Gospel has power to attract the heart toward God and heaven—to wean from earth and time—to protect in temptation and support in trial—to conquer besetting sins, and render its possessor watchful and active in recommending religion to his fellow-men. If his fellow-men suspect his sincerity, and conclude that he puts on the cloak of godliness only to subserve his own selfish ends, no matter how rigid a religionist he may be, such a man does not adorn the Christian name. He must have the spirit and power of godliness, or he can never be its adornment.

If the Christian character were as lovely as the Christianity it professes—if it were as meek and lowly in heart, as self-sacrificing and benevolent as he was, who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor—if it sought less the honor of the world, and more the honor which cometh from God only—and if to this meek and lowly, self-denying and benevolent spirit, it added a fearless attachment to truth and duty for truth and duty's sake, and the moral courage to do and to suffer unmoved, so that it might only finish its course with joy, it would be respected and honored even of a world that lieth in wickedness, and men would take knowledge of its disciples that they have been with Jesus.

III. If Christians would adorn the doctrine of

Christ, they must themselves *be examples of a sound and thorough-going morality.*

There is cause for enforcing this very obvious truth even upon the minds of those professing godliness. There is in the habits of some good men a heedlessness, a want of circumspection in their intercourse with their fellow-men, which justly brings reproach upon the sacred name whereby they are called. Christian morality has a standard above the morality of the world. Its disciples are admonished against "all appearance of evil;" they are urged to follow after "that which is good;" to "walk honestly and in wisdom toward them that are without;" and to "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." They serve a good Master; they walk by a good rule; they aim at a good end; and, if they adorn their vocation, they will so conduct themselves that "their good shall not be evil spoken of." They *ought* to be better than other men, and their moral character ought to be a uniform condemnation of all immorality and wickedness in every form, and a perpetual, though silent reproach to this ungodly and Christless world. Men may call them hypocrites and bigots—they may raise the outcry against their preciseness and strictness—but "wisdom is justified of her children." "They that cry down moral honesty," says that great jurist, John Selden, "cry down that which

is a great part of religion—my duty toward God, and my duty toward man. What care I to see a man run after a sermon if he cozens and cheats as soon as he comes home? On the other side, morality must not be without religion; religion must govern it." These thoughts commend themselves to all of us. I have known professed Christians who made uncommon pretensions to sanctity, and who, at a prayer-meeting, would be thought very devout and pious Christians, who in their intercourse with the world were men of very doubtful *veracity*. They may not directly affirm that to be true which they know to be false, but, either from inattention, or a romancing spirit, the love of exaggeration, or a calumnious and fault-finding spirit, or the spirit of self-seeking in some form, you can not confide in their statements. They do not mean to *lie*; but they do not mean, at all times and under all circumstances, to speak nothing but the truth. They are marked as men who are *incautious* in their statements. Their fellow-men watch them, doubt them, and they doubt themselves. Their "speech bewrayeth them." Others are more unscrupulous, and, in seasons of high public excitement, or scenes of party strife, or times of personal exposure, or peril to their pecuniary interest, or conflict with their adversary, or contest with a rival, or under the stimulus of envy, malignity, or re-

venge, boldly utter that which they know to be untrue, and trust to their piety to bear them out. A professed Christian who is uniformly, and every where, and always *true*—whose verbal promise is as good as his bond, and whose word and man questions—honors the teaching of his divine Master; who “did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.”

“Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.” This is Christian morality. The questionable usages of a financial, money-making, and gambling community are no law to a conscientious, honest, and honorable man. The law which governs such a man is the law of love. “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor.” It injures no man in body, soul, character, or outward estate. The Christian who *studies* to pursue such a course of conduct, and actually pursues it, is at a great remove from loose dealings, grasping covetousness, ingenious subtlety, artful deception, and legalized fraud. Not a few men professing godliness take leave of the Bible when they go into Wall Street. We have little respect for the professed Christian whose conscience is sold to the highest bidder. That Christian adorns his profession whose integrity can not be tampered with, and whose conscience no price can buy. “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatso-

ever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report—if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." We know what "these things" are, and how many virtues they comprise, and how many vices they condemn. We can see for ourselves into how many spheres of social and secular intercourse they enter, and how many minds, and hearts, and hands they control. The world will never honor religion until it exemplifies "the true, the good, the beautiful." Pagan philosophy aimed at this; Christianity alone can attain unto it. Christianity can not live without it. There must be a sound morality in the Church in order to give it influence with the world. The morality that begins with selfishness ends with selfishness. But this is not the morality of the Bible. There is no greater blunder in ethics than that self-interest is the standard of right. The philosophy that virtue consists in supreme selfishness is the philosophy of the devil, and the preacher or the author who defends it does so because Satan stands at his elbow. Christian duty and Christian honor are one thing; self-interest and expediency may be another and a very different one! We may settle it in our minds that the man who always and uniformly acts from self-interest alone, is not, can not be always and uniformly an hon-

est man. The honesty which will live in all circumstances, and abide all the vicissitudes of life — the only real and proper honesty — consists in giving every man his due, whether we are the gainers by it or the losers. I say every man his due; not as decided by the maxims of the world, nor yet as fixed by human laws, but as forever decided and unalterably fixed by the great law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

I have known true and honest Christians. I have known them in the sanctuary and in the social prayer-meeting; I have known them in benevolent institutions and in the business concerns of human life; I have known them in the domestic relations and in the confidence of friendship; I have known them in the pressure of toil and the relaxation of leisure, and I have found them every where and always the same true and honest men. I have loved, honored, and confided in them. I have known them in summer and winter, in seed-time and harvest, under heavy clouds and bright sunshine, and I can only say I wish I had known more. Such men are the adornment of a religious life, and a credit and honor to the Church of God.

IV. In the fourth place, if we would adorn the Savior's doctrine, we *must exhibit Christianity in its beautiful and winning consistency.*

Some Christians have a fair and unblemished

character in some particulars, and in other particulars it is lamentably blemished and defective. Some there are whose external conduct is without reproach, but whose knowledge of God's truth is confined to a narrow compass, and whose internal spirit is at variance with the truths they know. Like the Scribes and Pharisees of old, they "pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, and omit the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." Some there are who sometimes perform and sometimes neglect religious duties and the public institutions of the Gospel. Sometimes they observe the religious duties of the closet, the family, the house of God, and the Lord's table, and sometimes they neglect them. Some there are who are punctual in their religious duties, and negligent and remiss in the practice of the moral virtues; and some there are who are exemplary in the practice of moral duties, but are negligent in the religious. Those also there are who are exemplary out of doors, and who are tyrannical, morose, fretful, and unkind at home; never contented and happy; never at peace, and their home is a bedlam. You have known Christians who, on the other hand, are kind in the domestic relations, punctual in their religious observances, and open-handed in their charities, but their *tongue* is at fault—it is an unruly member. You have known Christians

against whose piety you would be slow to utter a reproachful thought, yet who are so perfectly absorbed in themselves and the world that they are oblivious of every thing else, and have neither time nor thought for the interests of the Church of God. Some there are who are all earnestness, and zeal, and energy to-day; but their goodness is like the early cloud and the morning dew that quickly passeth away. Some there are who rush headlong to duty, and are the creatures of a blind impetuosity; while at other seasons they are as cold as the winter's moonlight, and their calculating policy freezes their best emotions. There is a class of Christians, too, of so amiable and pleasant a temperament that they become all things to all men, and, in their love of popularity and good-companionship, are hesitating and doubtful reprovers of wickedness.

Such things as these are blemishes in the Christian character. As "dead flies," saith the wise man, "cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor, so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor." Christianity can do better than this. God would have it do better. Its principles are in harmony with one another; its doctrines with its precepts, and its precepts with its doctrines, and its normal character harmonizes with both. The claims upon it are comprehensive enough for all its

graces and all its virtues, nor is there any discordancy in their exercise. Though the best of men are imperfect, they may maintain a beautiful conformity and consistency of character. God requires it of them. Their own covenant engagements require it of them. The Church requires it of them. The world requires it of them. And if they would not bring reproach upon themselves, upon their fellow-Christians, and upon Christianity itself, they will aim at attaining this honorable consistency of character, full and rounded out, and thus adorning the doctrine of God their Savior.

V. I must add, in the fifth place, if Christians would adorn Christianity, they *must love as brethren*.

Love to the brethren is an affection not prescribed in the Ten Commandments. It is not the love of God, or man as such, but the love of Christians as Christians. "A new commandment," says the Savior, "I give unto you, that ye love one another." "Seeing ye have purified your souls," saith the apostle, "in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." The love of the brethren grows out of the spirit of the Gospel. It partakes so much of the Spirit of God and heaven that it is the certain evidence of regeneration.

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"Hereby *know* we that we have passed from death unto life because *we love the brethren.*" It is an affection so new in kind, and rests on a foundation so peculiar, that it can not exist in the heart without revolutionizing the whole man, and showing him to be a new creature.

We much doubt if this characteristic of piety is sufficiently thought of. There is no one thing that confers greater honor on the Christian name than this mutual love of Christians. God loves them; God himself loves the brethren. He loved his Son; but he so loved the brethren that he gave his holy and precious Son for them. He took not the meanest nor the brightest diadem from his head to give as a ransom for them, but he gave the Son of his love. Do you ask, then, how much you shall love your Christian brother, and how much of your heart you shall give him? See, then, how much God loves him. Look what he has done. Go to the manger, and learn it there. Then go to the cross, and see how he has given to your Christian brother his only-begotten Son. And how do you feel, and how ought you to approach the man for whom God gave his Son? Oh, how touching the appeal, "Brethren, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another!" And when that eternal Son of God came down, every step in that descending path was the joyful and buoyant step of love—new

love—love unknown and unheard of in heaven before. And while on earth, the only question which seemed at issue in his life was whether his love could do most or suffer most. And when he was pressing his way to the cross, through hatred, blasphemy, and cruelty, he turned and said to his disciples, “This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you!” As *I have loved you*—what words are these? And now see him, no longer on the cross, but on the throne, pleading for them, and learn how much that once suffering, now reigning One loves the brethren. The heart of Christ warms toward us just in the measure in which our hearts warm toward our brother and his. “If ye love me,” says he, “keep my commandments; and this is my commandment, that ye love one another.” There are those to whom he will at last say, “Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me.”

How, then, can we hope to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things, if we do not love as brethren? Why is it that those whom God “hath blessed with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, according as he hath chosen them in him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in *love*,” should be so negligent of the claims of Christian love and confidence?

Have we forgotten that "God is *love*, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him?" If he has been our dwelling-place in all generations, and if our home is now the bosom of his love, why is it that we have so little fellowship with those who love and honor him more, it may be, than we ourselves love and honor him? This cold neglect, this frosty and chilling alienation, these evil surmisings, this observable want of brotherly love, are a deep reproach upon Christianity. Christians are not watchful of the reputation, the usefulness, the feelings, and the comforted fellowship of Christians as the blessed and loving Lord requires. The tranquillity and preciousness of the communion-table, and the peace of a whole Church, are often endangered by the unbrotherly carriage of a single individual. Christianity will never make rapid progress in the world until the conduct of its disciples savors more of "whatsoever things are lovely." You may multiply discussion upon discussion in proof of its divine origin; but one such Church as that of which its pagan enemies were constrained to say, "Behold how these Christians love one another!" were instead of a thousand other arguments. How are the men of the world to be allured to the brotherhood of the saints if they find no brotherhood? The redeemed Church of the living God ought to dwell in an atmosphere of

love. Enter more deeply, my brethren, into sympathy with God your Savior in this matter. Be willing to make some sacrifices for love to the brethren. Labor to cultivate and show this sweet spirit. God has no higher employment on this earth than to show to the sons and daughters of men the love of Christ, and to develop the spirit of love in them. If we are his children, his Spirit is with us for this very purpose, and our fellowship of love is the great proof that we abide in the love of God.

It is not necessary for me to extend this induction of particulars. We ask Christians to reflect upon the thoughts already suggested. If men are ever convinced of the truth and beauty of religion, they must see its adornment in the lives of Christians. They must see something in Christians they can not see in others. Give to Christians the character we have imperfectly delineated, and they will have no reason to be ashamed of their religion. The enemies of God will despair of finding any thing against them. Men will no longer stand in doubt of them, and they will cut off occasion of reproach from those that seek occasion. The pure and holy nature of their religion will be seen, and its amiable, and benign, and vigorous, and forthgoing tendency will be acknowledged and honored. When once the Church thus shows forth the glory of

him who called her out of darkness into his marvellous light, she herself will be the avenue by which he goes forth to the conquest of the world. She will be a "living epistle, known and read of all men." She herself will live—live in the heart of Infinite Love—live in the thoughts, and memory, and history of men—live in undying faith and hope—live in growing beauty, "a living temple," built up of lively stones, a habitation of God through the Spirit. Her ministers will be clothed with salvation; around and through her sanctuaries will flow the pure waters of life; and she herself, decked with righteousness as with a garment, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels, shall become the counterpart of the promise, "The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations." All that see her shall acknowledge her, that they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.

SERMON XVIII.

SELF-INSPECTION.

PSALM CXXXIX., 23, 24.—“*Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*”

EVERY genuine disciple of the New Testament feels the need of progress in the divine life. His sins are a burden to him ; it is a grief to him that his heart so often departs from God. He is engaged in a spiritual warfare. He finds some things that are right within him, and such as God approves ; and he finds many that are wrong, and such as God and his own conscience condemns. He is governed by new principles, and affections that are new. He struggles against his earth-born propensities, and yet becomes more tenderly conscious of the sin that dwelleth in him. He is like a warder upon the watch-tower against his spiritual enemies ; watching, and resisting, and striving, and praying to keep under his body, and keep his heart with all diligence, lest after all he should be cast away.

Something like this was the Psalmist's state

of mind when he uttered the prayer contained in the text. He was a subject of imparted grace; he had an enlightened and tender conscience; he made the divine law the rule of his duty; and, on these very accounts, he had a clear and lively sense of his wickedness. He would search out every wicked way. He had found out by his own experience that it is no light matter to sin against God. And therefore he prays, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

To render the subject here presented as practical as I am able, I propose to inquire what may be considered as indications that there is some wicked way in us; what are the means by which we may detect this wicked way; and what is the object we should propose to ourselves in detecting it.

I. In the first place, what may be considered as indications that there is some wicked way in us.

We may be suspicious of ourselves in this particular,

1. In the first instance, *if we find ourselves averse to the honest inspection of our own character.* There is nothing in which men are more easily deceived than in the opinion they form of themselves. Men who exclude all self-inspection

are very apt to do so because their consciences are thereby too deeply probed. Introverted thoughts disturb them, and produce a secret conviction that all is not right within. We should never be averse to the most rigid self-inspection if we were conscious that all our conduct would meet our own approbation, and that our accounts with God stood, in some good measure, as they ought to stand. So long as men cleave to any remaining lust, or adhere to any wrong course of action, they will shut their eyes upon their own character. "He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be re-proved." A view of ourselves is often too ugly to look at, much more to look after. It is much safer to suspect our religion than to overrate it. There is but one way to heaven, while there are many ways to hell. "Happy is the man that feareth always."

It is also ominous of evil,

2. In the second place, *when we have little or no religious enjoyment.* The religion of the Bible professes to be, and is, in its own nature, a well-spring of enjoyment. "The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It is adapted to the wants of the soul, and in every view fitted to make it happy. It always supplies these wants where the mind is not obscured, and the conscience is not embarrassed, and the

tranquillity and joy of the soul are not broken in upon by the habits or deeds of wickedness. Practiced wickedness and the divine Comforter can not dwell together in the same bosom. Even where the reproaches of conscience are the least severe, they interrupt our religious enjoyment. Wicked men may sin and think nothing of it, but when good men sin they lose their confidence and joy in God. They have no sweet reliance on the truth of his promises and on his covenant faithfulness. They are not comforted because they are seeking comfort where it is not to be found. Their affections do not tend heavenward, nor is their eye fixed, as it was wont to be, on their Father's house. They have been led astray; and, as they depart from God, God departs from them. They find by experience that "there is no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness." No disciple of Christ can be happy so long as he lives in the indulgence of open or secret wickedness. One deliberate act of disobedience wakes up in his bosom a controversy with God. Aside from those instances of religious melancholy which arise from bodily infirmity, the man who finds his spiritual vigor impaired, and who has little or no religious enjoyment, will be very apt to discover some indulgence, some untender walk, something done, or something left undone, that is displeasing to God.

We should also suspect ourselves of some wicked way,

3. In the third place, *if we have but little relish for religious duties.* If a child of God has lost his wonted relish for the Bible—if he finds himself disposed to undervalue the privileges of the sanctuary—if he is not allured to intercourse with God in his family and in his closet—if he has no liberty at the throne of grace, and little satisfaction in the fellowship of the saints, and little peace and comfort at the Lord's table, he has reason to fear that there is some lurking sin which embarrasses him, and, it may be, has been taking the viper to his bosom. The penalty of sinning to pardoned sinners is that their sin unfits them for their religious duties. Perhaps the first serious conviction that they have been transgressors meets them at the throne of grace, or at the family altar, where their lips are closed, and where the ghost of their transgressions follows them. Although "his ear is not heavy that it can not hear, nor his arm shortened that it can not save, their iniquities have separated between them and their God." We need not be scandalous sinners in order to vitiate all our religious duties and privileges. "If I regard iniquity in *my heart*, the Lord will not hear me." If we practice iniquity unknown to others—if we are more afraid of the shame of sinning than of the

wickedness of sinning—if there is some darling lust which retains its dominion—if we entertain and indulge the secret desire and secret purpose of sinning, though restrained from the actual commission of it—and if we can look upon past sins without sincere self-abasement, and humiliation, and thorough reform, either of these, and, much more, all of them combined, are enough to neutralize and spoil all our religious duties. We remark,

4. In the fourth place, there is reason to suspect wickedness in ourselves *when we rest satisfied without a good hope through grace that we are made accepted in the Beloved.* The foundation of the Christian's hope, and the evidences of its genuineness, are two distinct things. The foundation is one; the great fact that "God made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The evidences of its genuineness and heavenly origin are the varied graces of the Spirit, and the varied virtues of the Christian character and life. These are so clearly defined in the Word of God, that, by honest self-inspection, we may know whether we are in the broad way that leadeth to destruction, or in the strait and narrow way that leadeth unto life. We do not affirm that the man who does not possess an unwavering hope is necessarily indulging himself in

presumptuous or secret sin. It may be his anxiety and grief that he does not possess it; and it may put him upon many a searching inquiry, and many a strenuous effort to grow in grace, if so be he may attain to full assurance. But if, not having a good hope, he has no anxiety about it—if he is content to live without it, and goes on his way in this spiritual skepticism and obscurity, it is proof either that he is not a child of God, or that he is a fearful wanderer from the fold, enticed by some darling sin, in the indulgence of which he is afraid of being disturbed—some sinful practice, the enormity of which he does not perceive, because he is not prepared at once and forever to abandon it.

5. We add, in the fifth place, that it is an indication of indulged sin *when we perceive a tendency of mind to depreciate essential truth*. Those there are whose religious creed was once stringently orthodox, who have almost imperceptibly slidden into a looser and more liberal theology. Once they were urgent advocates for the truth as it is in Jesus; now they can see one after another of the truths of the Gospel sacrificed, not only without solicitude, but with secret complacency. Once they understood the difference between the "precious and the vile," and could define the line of demarkation between the hope that maketh not ashamed and the hope that shall perish when

God taketh away the soul; now they are indifferent to these distinctions, and begin to doubt whether "strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life." They flatter themselves there is not so much danger of being finally lost as they themselves once believed, and that it is no impossible thing that more liberal views may be sanctioned by the Word of God.

Why is this? Why is it that men minister the flattering unction to their own souls, and would fain persuade themselves that there is no necessity of this deep solicitude on the subject of personal religion? Any man who is acquainted with his own heart must honor the Savior's answer to these inquiries when he affirms that men "love darkness rather than light, because *their deeds* are evil." Open or secret wickedness is not consistent with the love of truth. Truth has no temple in the heart of a backsliding Christian, and because he "has turned away from the "holy commandment delivered unto him." It is a bad symptom in any man, much more a man professing godliness, to find himself a secret advocate of error. It is a sure sign that his religious inquiries, instead of being influenced by right affections, are controlled by his spiritual declension. There is a veil upon his heart. He does not do the will of God, and therefore does not know of the doctrine. Practiced wickedness blinds and

closes his eyes. The truth makes him wretched, and he does not wish to know it. He has been led astray by the Tempter; his error is practical, and more than ever does he need the divine teaching. It is practiced wickedness which leads men to think they are right when they are wrong, and to imagine themselves safe for eternity when their spiritual state is to the last degree critical and dangerous.

With this view of the indications that there is some wicked way in us, we pass,

II. To consider, in the second place, WHAT ARE THE MEANS BY WHICH WE MAY DETECT THIS WICKED WAY.

Here we remark,

1. In the first place, it is by *instituting an impartial and faithful scrutiny into our hearts and conduct*. We must not be backward to bring ourselves to the test of God's truth, whatever the result of the scrutiny. If in our past history there is sin unrepented of and unforsaken, or if it is found lurking in disguise in our present character and conduct, we should be more than willing to detect it, though it fill us with mortification and shame. We should cherish and cultivate a keen sensibility, a quick and penetrating discernment of all that is wrong. We shall never detect the particular sin, or course of sin which embarrasses us, so long as we shrink from viewing our character as it is.

There is no man who, if he deals honestly with himself, may not know what passes within his bosom, and what are the motives which govern his conduct. He has the law of God in his hands, and "by the *law* is the knowledge of sin." This is the infallible standard by which we are to ascertain our true character and conduct. There is no way so effectual of detecting besetting sins as to take up the *law of God*, and compare our hearts and lives with it. Let us ask ourselves whether or not we have any other god before the living and true God, and whether or not our love of him so excites us to devout affections, and so animates us to holy obedience, that the great end we aim at is to glorify God and enjoy him forever? In our secular arrangements, do we acknowledge him, and feel our dependence upon him, and form them and pursue them with a due reference to his guidance, approbation, and blessing? Do we never profane his holy name, or stand by and hear his name dishonored, slandered, profaned, without any expression of disapprobation, and without a frown? Are we faultless in our reverence and observance of his Sabbath and his ordinances, or do we observe them merely at our convenience, and, when hard pushed, do we trample upon them, and allow, and it may be require, those who are dependent upon us to disregard them for the purposes of our pleasure or

worldly gain? Do none of us select the Sabbath as the day we can best afford for medical consultation or relief—or for a short journey—or for a long voyage—or for a neglected correspondence—or for the examination of some title-deed, or some vexed question in law—or some business arrangement for the following week, ingeniously persuading ourselves that these are “works of necessity and mercy?”

If any of you are trespassers on the claims of God your Maker as set forth in the first table of the Law, how does the case stand in regard to the duties of the second table, and as your conduct affects your fellow-men? Are there no offenses which conscience condemns in the varied social relations—offenses of unkindness—offenses of negligences—offenses of impurity—offenses of treachery and fraud—offenses of ambition and strife—offenses of tale-bearing, falsehood, and slander? St. Paul says “he had not known sin unless the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” Thou shalt not *covet*. Who shall specify the many forms and ways by which this tenth commandment is violated? I know of no such sermon on this class of sins as is every week preached in our courts of justice. Much as is thrust upon the pulpit on this subject, it is ignorant—utterly ignorant—compared with the perpetually accumulating facts thrust upon the no-

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tice of the legal profession. There are men who despise pilfering and dishonesty, who nevertheless think little of double-dealing, concealment, over-reaching, and dexterous management in taking advantage of their fellow-men. And what multitudes are there who sacrifice domestic peace, political and religious principle, honor, and life itself, to the love of gain? If "covetousness is idolatry," are none of us idolaters? The covetous wish—the envy at another's celebrity, and fame, and wealth—the evil eye resting on the forbidden fruit, longing for the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment—discontent and murmuring—the vain conceit that arraigns the divine providence, and charges it with injustice—the grieving and repining after things too high for us, are all the fruit of that sordid covetousness which the Lord abhorreth.

Though a practicable, yet is it no easy task to make this scrutiny honest and faithful. But we must look these sins in the face. We must look at them in the light of God's holy law—in the light of God's countenance—in the light of prayer—in the light of the cross—in the light of the judgment seat—in the clear light of heaven—in the blazing light of hell. The sins of other men ought to put us upon inquiring whether we ourselves are not guilty of the same sins, and their fall should make us tremble. We may think we

are established Christians, and have overcome this or that sin long ago ; but this is another temptation of the devil. We may think there are some sins for which we have no natural taste ; but this is another proud and presumptuous lie ; for the seeds of all sin are within us. We may sometimes go as near some overt sin as possible, without actually committing it ; this is another deep-laid plot of the devil. There is one divine injunction we are all too unmindful of, and it is this : "Abstain from all *appearance* of evil ;" and this : "See that ye walk *circumspectly*, not as fools, but as wise."

2. In the second place, if we would detect every wicked way, *we must cheerfully submit to the scrutiny and reproof of our fellow-men.* Our own conscience may be perverted, and blind to defects that are quite observable to others. We may live in habits of sin, or in some one habit of sinful indulgence which, with all our self-scrutiny, we have failed to detect, while it may be the subject of obloquy and merriment to the men of the world, and the theme of reluctant and painful remark among our Christian friends. They love us, but there are spots and blemishes on our otherwise fair name which they wish to see removed. And happy is the man who has found a kind and faithful reprove. "Open rebuke is better than secret love." It is "better to hear the rebuke of

the wise than the song of fools." "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee." If we would detect our particular sins, we must welcome this Christian counsel and watchfulness. There stands the precept in God's Word, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." We become "partakers in other men's sins" when our Christian watchfulness might prevent them. It is true that, for the most part, men have enough to do to watch over themselves without going abroad to watch over others. It is true that he who makes it his business to spy out imperfections in others is very apt to be a busybody and a tattler, and even to turn out a calumniator; but the obligation still exists to "exhort one another daily, lest we be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." To repel this watchfulness, and take offense at it, is the true way of sinking into negligence, of violating our own consciences, of becoming callous, and degenerating into obduracy. The fellowship and vows of God's people require them thus to "watch over one another in the Lord," and to exhort one another to beware of sin. Even the banterings of friends and the slandering of enemies may lead us to find out some traces of unforsaken, unconfessed, unthought-of wickedness. I add,

3. If we would detect any particular wicked-

ness, *we must*, in the third place, *sincerely desire that God himself would search and try us*. He is able to "search Jerusalem with candles;" he can discover our character and conduct to ourselves, and bring them out to the honest inspection of an enlightened conscience. He can do it by his word; he can do it by his Spirit; he can do it by his providence. He can prove us, and try us as silver is tried. Nor should we dread the searching process. The prayer should often go up to his throne, "Lord, make me to know my transgression and my sin!" "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me!" We should often kneel in the divine presence, set ourselves before his face, and remember that he seeth in secret, and that his eyes behold, and his eyelids try the children of men. Before his throne we should mark those events which bring our sin to remembrance, and those truths and those impressions upon our own minds which show us its vileness. We should implore him that personal afflictions, domestic trials, and the sins and trials of others, should impart sensitiveness of conscience, and awaken us to a more just view of ourselves. We should beg him to show us what our sins have done, and what stripes were inflicted on Him who bore them in his own body on the tree, and what pangs agitated his

holy soul for deeds of ours. We must think no sin small, but endeavor to look at it more as "the abominable thing which his soul hateth." He seeth not as man seeth. Oh, how many thoughts are wrapped up in this one! Who perceives the full import of the declaration, "Thou, God, seest me?" Should we not know ourselves more if we increased in the knowledge of God? Sin insults his purity, insults his goodness, insults his justice, insults his power, insults his truth, insults his mercy. It strikes him, and he feels the blow. When he sets our iniquities before him, our secret sins in the light of his countenance, oh, they are blackness, they are malignity; they mount up to heaven, and make us shrink and tremble under the all-searching eye of Infinite Purity. When we bow at his throne, we sometimes feel his awe-inspiring presence; and the thought that he sees us, and knows our down-sitting and our uprising, and understands our thoughts afar off, is like the lightning's flash upon the deep abyss of wickedness within. Yet, if we would detect our sins, we must be often at his throne, entreating him that he would not suffer us to deceive ourselves, but so instruct us that we may detect every lurking and hidden wickedness. We proceed, then,

III. In the third place, to consider the object we should propose to ourselves in detecting any wicked way.

Here it is obvious,

1. In the first place, it is that we may *confess and forsake it*. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy." It is as natural to men to cover their sin as it is to commit it. So our first parents did; the one throwing the blame upon the woman, the other upon the serpent. But neither they nor any one else ever did or ever will reform who denies or excuses his wickedness. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old all the day through my roaring." Conscience is never quieted by covering up our transgressions, for it anticipates the day when "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." There is nothing gained by detecting any particular sin so long as we are unwilling to confess and forsake it. "I acknowledge my transgressions," says the Psalmist, "and my sin is ever before me, and my iniquity have I not hid." We can look for nothing but a wounded conscience and a burdened heart unless we are prepared to "make a clean breast of it," and a frank acknowledgment of our wrong-doing. There is a fearful tendency to omit confession in our prayers, or to make our confession so general as to exclude all personal wickedness. The adversary would frighten us away from confession because

it is fitted to show us our vileness. Every man would do well to set apart special seasons for confession of sin. In the biography of Robert M'Cheyne, I find the following remarks from his Diary: "I ought to have a stated day of confession, with fasting—say once a month. I ought on Sabbath evenings, and on Communion Sabbath evenings, to be especially careful to confess the sins of my holy things, and the sins of my confessions." Which of us does this? The great object of detecting sin is that our own minds may be duly impressed with its enormity; so that we may resolve against it, and pray against it, and, through the strength of divine grace, may renounce and forsake it. Confession is nothing more than words—nay, it is an attempt to impose on the heart-searching God if we do not bring forth fruits meet for repentance. This is no easy matter. It is a *crucifying* process; they that "are Christ's have *crucified* the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Sin will not die of itself, but must be subject to a violent, lingering, and painful death. There is a warfare between sin and grace, and in which, while grace is ultimately triumphant, sin is ever struggling for the mastery. It is matter of thankfulness and rejoicing when we are enabled to get the victory over any particular sin. And though the conquest be gradual, and our spiritual enemies are

only driven out "little by little," yet *one sin* detected, confessed, forsaken, subdued, is another enemy trodden down, another earnest of final triumph.

2. A second object to be attained by detecting our sins is that we may *find pardon for them in the blood of the cross*. We need pardon for them. Sweet is the hope of pardon; and the ground of it is firm and sure, and the terms and conditions of it are clearly revealed. There is no faith in the great Propitiation where there is no forsaking of sin. If we had such views and emotions as we ought to possess, we should deem it a privilege to forsake sin, whether we find mercy or not; but when we know that "there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared;" and that, "though our sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow;" and that, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," we need not fear detecting it. The detection itself will serve to make us the more deeply feel our need of pardoning mercy, and the more humbly, the more promptly, and the more hopefully carry it to the blood of the great atonement. We then have a conscience washed in the blood of Christ. We go to Him for forgiveness of every sin; we confess every sin we have detected over his great sacrifice; we go over every dark spot that it may be washed out,

and, the heavier our sins, the greater, the more urgent the necessity of fleeing to Jesus for pardoning mercy.

3. A third and most important object in detecting our sins is that *we may be led in the way everlasting*. This every good man honestly and earnestly desires. He would attain to a growing likeness to the mind, and heart, and will of God. It is right in itself; it is for God's glory and his own usefulness, for his happiness in this world and his everlasting blessedness in the world to come, that he should be more conformed to the image of his divine Master. Exposed and helpless as he is, he should daily cast himself upon his divine care and power, and daily pray, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." Every sin obstructs his heavenward course. It not only clips his wings when he would fain spread them, but drags him down to earth and sense, the slave, it may be, of one poor sin. He stumbles and falls, and becomes the occasion of stumbling to others. When he has detected any particular sin, it is that he may set his whole soul against it, pouring forth his prayer to God that his whole law may be written on his heart, and that no iniquity may have dominion over him. "Lead me in the way everlasting;" this is the great object of his self-inspection, and this his great desire. His strength is to know his weakness, and to live un-

der a soul-affecting view of the fullness and life-giving efficacy of Christ. He alone can bring him back from his wanderings to duty and to peace. He would forsake detected sin; but the work of restoration is a great work, too great for his own unaided powers. And how sweet the truth, that, if they are his people, however far they may have wandered, he will bring them back. How sweet the promise, "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock, I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." Though it may cost them trial, he will bring them back, and bring them again to his holy temple.

This, then, is the great object of their self-searching, that God "would lead them in the way everlasting." It is impossible to be led in this way so long as we indulge in any known wickedness. As well may the body be in health and prosper when some secret disease is preying upon it, as the soul flourish under some unsubdued wickedness. This is the chief cause of all spiritual darkness. It is a ponderous load in the upward course of the soul. She must discover and forsake detected sin if she would go in the way everlasting. If cherished sin lurks in our bosom, and winds itself about our path, and the viper be not crushed, sooner or later we shall find

out that our hopes of heaven are delusive, and that a deceived heart hath turned us aside.

My Christian friends, will you be clogged and fettered by apprehensions like these, or be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord—living nearer to God—escaping the pollutions of a world that lieth in wickedness—defended from the roaring lion who goeth about seeking whom he may devour—enjoying his presence who is your glory and the lifter up of your head, and at last find death disarmed of his sting and the grave of its terrors? I know your answer to these inquiries. You would be “led in the way everlasting.” Well, then, forget not that the searching eye of God is upon you, and that your safety lies in your dependence on him and your trust in him. The best and safest state of a Christian is that, while he watches unto prayer, he is conscious of his own weakness, casts himself upon God, keeps his eye fixed on him, and rests on him. The best of men are weak; but God is strong, and his grace is sufficient for all who trust in him. The Psalmist could say, “He restoreth my soul, and leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” If any of you have wandered from truth and from duty, it is he alone that can bring you back. You may have wandered so far as to have lost the power, and well-nigh the thought of returning, yet he

can reclaim you. You may even now be looking back to by-gone years, and wishing that it were with you as in days that are past; and he may now be arranging the dispensations of his providence toward you, and the more affecting dispensations of his grace, in order to restore you to holiness and peace. You may change, but he does not change. You may forget his care, but if you are indeed his, his love toward you is never weaned, nor his patience exhausted. You may forget, but he does not forget. You may be insensible to your danger, yet all the while he is watching over you to turn your feet from fatal snares. It may cost you many a pang of conscience to be brought back—nay, many a season of darkness, and tribulation upon tribulation, but, cost what it may, he will bring you back. Many a time you may say with David, “One day I shall perish by the hand of Saul,” but the besetting foe shall be disappointed of his prey. The promise is, “I will remember my covenant with thee, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant, 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, saith the Lord God.”

And what is the language of our subject to you, my beloved hearers, who are not the children

of God? You may perhaps think little of particular sins, and you may think little of that all-comprehensive sin, an evil heart of unbelief. Oh ye, whose carnal mind is enmity against God, who pass your lives in thoughtlessness and vanity—in forgetfulness of God your Maker—in mocking his Sabbaths and making light of his salvation—in resisting the calls of his Gospel and his Spirit! be ye admonished that there is a God in heaven, and that he will search this out. It will be a wonderful and most affecting act of mercy if he ever recovers you from the blindness and infatuation of your wickedness to the character and blessings of his people. I know not how long he will bear and plead with you, nor what combination of circumstances may be brought to act on a poor rebellious worm for the purpose of plucking him from destruction; but this I know, sooner or later this day of thoughtlessness will be past, and the day of solemn conviction will come—and not only of conviction, but of righteousness and judgment; yea, when the hour of execution shall startle the fears that are to be realized only in an unprovided-for and miserable eternity. You who never now go to his throne to implore his searching eye, will find it a fearful day when the great Searcher of all hearts, in the presence of an assembled and arrested universe, shall convince all the ungodly of all their ungod-

ly deeds. Oh, now let your prayer be, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

"Sinners! awake betimes; ye fools, be wise!
Awake before the dreadful morning rise;
Change your vain thoughts; your crooked ways amend;
Fly to the Savior; make the Judge your friend."

Rush not to the judgment with the sovereign Arbiter and Judge your foe. Are you prepared to stand there in that day? If one sin, undetected, exposes the people of God, and overshadows all their hopes, how dark the prospect, how dreadful the despair of those whom millions of sins have not driven to the cross of Christ, and who must answer for them all, unatoned for and unforgiven, unrepented of and persevered in to the last!

SERMON XIX.

THE BENEDICTION

EPHESIANS, vi., 24.—“*Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.*”

THE public *benediction*, under the Old Testament economy, was prescribed by God himself. “On this wise shall ye bless the children of Israel: The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace!” Most beautiful, most comforting, most cheering are these precious words. The same in spirit, though savoring more of Christ and his Gospel, are the recorded benedictions of the New Testament. They vary somewhat in form, but in substance they are the same. To the Christians at Rome St. Paul says, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!” To the Corinthians he says, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all!” To the Galatians he says, “Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ be with your spirit!" To the Colossians he says, "Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." To Timothy he says, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit; grace be with you!" To the Hebrews he says, "Grace be with you all!" St. Peter, in writing to the scattered tribes, says, "Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus!" St. John, in the Apocalypse, uses the compendious form, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!" The benediction in the text is at the close of the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!"

There is one strong peculiarity in all the apostolic benedictions that is, for the most part, lost sight of by the ministry of modern times. They assume that the benediction is their own, and simply expressive of *their own benevolent wish and prayer*. Almost without exception they change the form of it by prefixing one little word—*may* "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!" This is not the apostolical benediction. That is full and authoritative, and more than an expression of the preacher's good will. The potential *may* has nothing to do with it. It is not that which *may* be, or that which the preacher desires simply; it is that *which* is, and which goes forth in Christ's name and authority.

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Here it is: "GRACE BE WITH ALL THEM that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!"

It is a great matter to understand our true state and standing before God. A mistake here is not easily rectified, and may be a mistake for eternity. "The heart is *deceitful* above all things," and needs to be looked to and watched over. Like the wise man who built his house upon a rock, we should dig deep, that our foundation may be sure. The test of Christian character is not wrapped up in obscurity; nor does it depend upon metaphysical subtleties; nor does it rest upon human authority, nor any nice discriminations of ecclesiastical law, nor any painful observance of religious rites and ceremonies. "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart." The most ignorant Christian can understand and apply it quite as well as the most learned and wise. All who have the Bible in their hands know the meaning of the text when it says, "Grace be with them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!" They are generous words, and just like the great and generous Being who utters them. They overlook none, whatever his condition, name, sect, or attainments. To the whole family of God on earth and in heaven they say, "Grace be with them *all*!" It is not the preacher's deliverance and desire merely; it is God's authoritative *benediction*. It is heaven's

own announcement of favor to all who love the Son of God; yes, to all—all, if they do but *love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*.

The language is cautious and discriminating, and defines the great and controlling principle of Christianity. Moral virtues are not Christian graces. There may be an unblemished moral character, and one that is founded upon the principles of a sound ethical philosophy, but it may not be a truly Christian character. There may be high and noble impulses, that are the mere workings of nature, and the result of refined culture and intercourse, but they are not necessarily Christian, and have been, and still are found in the more elevated circles of paganism and infidelity. The great principle of Christian character, and the high motive of Christian conduct, is love to our Lord Jesus Christ. There is the love of fame and advancement; there is the love of friends and the love of country; there is the love of decency and decorum, which shrinks at the violation of any of the proprieties of social life, and recoils from all that is low and unworthy; and beautiful as such a code of morals is for men as the creatures of time, it does not reach them as the creatures of God, as transgressors of his law, and born for immortality. The Apostle Paul, in speaking of the great motive and impulse of Christian character, gives emphasis to

the love of Christ. "The love of Christ constraineth us;" this it is that makes the Christian. Other principles may influence him; other laws may bind him; other impulses may urge him to fulfill the duties of his vocation, but the paramount principle and impulse is the love of Christ, the law of Christ.

Our text gives emphasis to this thought when it says, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ *in sincerity*." It is obvious that thus to love him is to love him in *his true character*. In the early ages of Christianity there were false Christs, to follow whom was to be the followers of anti-Christ. Even now there are anti-Christs in the world. There are also views and opinions of the Person of the Son of God, which, if adopted, evince that those who adopt them, instead of loving *him* in sincerity, love an imagination of their own. The Christ of the Bible, though "the seed of the woman," is "the Son of the Highest;" though in the "form of a servant," thought it "no robbery to be equal with God;" and, though condemned at the bar of Pilate, is the "Ruler in Israel" and the final Judge. He is the great Teacher, the great Example, and the great Propitiation for the sins of men. To the unbelieving world he is a "stone of stumbling and rock of offense," while to "them that believe he is precious"—the rock of all their hopes, and the "sure foundation."

Right principles lie at the foundation of right character. The affections follow in the train of the thoughts. We never treat the Savior as we ought unless we think of him as we ought. If we think of him as an impostor, we shall treat him as an impostor. If we think of him as a mere man, we shall treat him as a mere man. If we think of him as some angelic being, we shall treat him as such. But if we think of him as "God manifest in the flesh"—as the Wonder of the universe—as "glorious in holiness and fearful in praises"—as Prophet, Priest, and King—we have one of the elements of true love to him.

Nor is this all. If our affections correspond with our views, our love is *strong and ardent*. If we love him at all, we "love much;" we love him more than all creatures; and though it never will be sinless and perfect love on this side heaven, because it is so inconstant, and so often diverted from its great object, yet is it habitually love that is supreme. We love others; but, if we are Christians, we do not love them as we love him. We take enjoyment in other things; but they are minor and evanescent joys compared with the complacency and delight, the grateful thoughts and emotions, the adoring confidence and joy, the sweet fellowship in prayer and praise, the heavenly light and unearthly favor which we receive from Christ. There are seasons when, as

"the hart panteth after the water-brooks," so the soul thirsteth—longeth for Christ, and when it would bid all other joys depart. Nothing holds that place in the believer's heart which Christ holds. The world has nothing to give in comparison with the love of Christ to him and his to Christ. He "counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ." Amid all that is beautiful and fair, Christ is the most fair and beautiful—"fairer than the sons of men." Grace is "poured into his lips," and he is "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows." And the attachment is mutual. The sweet chorus of the Church's song—her "Song of Songs," is, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Nothing can break the bond. "We love *him* because he first loved *us*." His love to his people claims this pre-eminence—his intrinsic loveliness claims it. He knows his own worthiness, and may not consent to occupy a subordinate place in any human heart. His language evermore is, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."

Still farther: the great test of all our attachments is the spirit of *self-denial*. The love that makes no sacrifices for the object of its affections does not deserve the name. Love is a sufferer every where. Wedded love is a sufferer; parental love is a sufferer; filial love is a sufferer.

Love of country is a sufferer; human love in every form is a sufferer, because it is self-denying. Its sincerity and strength are indicated by the service and the suffering it consents to for the objects of its attachment. We know something of the conflicts between the claims of Christ and the claims of self and the world. The *love of self*—that inbred poison, that serpent venom, that deadly plague, which breaks out in so many forms of self-dependence, self-righteousness, self-glorying, and self-indulgence—receives its death-wound only from the cross of Christ. There it dies, a painful and lingering, yet a certain death, and the less painful and lingering as the heart is the more filled with love to Jesus. There is nothing which knows so well how to suffer, and cheerfully and of choice for those it loves, as the love which is “shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.” Its character, its province, its joy is to live, to labor, to suffer for higher and nobler ends than its own. Why was it that the eternal Son left the throne where he was a partaker of heavenly glory, and came down to this low, wearisome, and wicked earth, and here encountered its toils, its sorrows, and its ten thousand deaths in one, but that he loved his Church with an everlasting love, and a love stronger than death? When the mighty Sufferer hung between heaven and earth, and his enemies bid him come down,

and thus show the world that he was indeed the Christ, why was it that he disdained the challenge but from the intensity of his love? He could have annihilated his enemies by a word, but he could not come down from the cross. Not all the powers of the created universe could have brought him down. There were moral bonds that kept him there which his heart of love knew not how to break. Stronger far than the spikes and cords which bound him was his irrepressible love for guilty men. This was Christianity in its birth and in its perfect manhood; and what marvel if the author and finisher of our faith should say, "If any man will be my disciple, *let him deny himself*, and take up his cross, and follow me?" No man knows how to deny himself for Christ except the man who loves him. His commands often countervail our wishes, thwart our arrangements, and are grievous to flesh and blood, but, if we love him, we shall keep his commandments. Our will is often opposed to his; but in the same degree in which we love him, we shall prefer his will to our own. Love can obey him; love can suffer for him. The Christian is thankful when his pilgrimage is light and glad; but if his loving Savior calls him to severer burdens, he loves him too well to refuse the yoke. Be it sorrow and pain, love can bear them. Be it reproach and ignominy — be it poverty

which he dreads, perplexity he is unfitted for, humiliation he is ashamed of, solitude he abhors, labor which wearies and responsibility which depresses, love can sustain them. If it is a thorny road he must travel—if the battle of life be sharp and long—if he can gain the victory not until death crowns him with its pale laurels, his love to Christ will carry him through.

This is true love. It is no delusion; it is not hypocrisy; it is more than mere profession and outward show. It is the heart's warm love; it is the fruit of the Spirit; it is the inner life which the eye of man does not see, but which he sees who looketh on the heart. It is love of which the heart is conscious, and of which he who exercises it may say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee!" It is love to our Lord Jesus Christ *in sincerity*.

And to such persons our text announces, "Grace be with them all!"

Let us, then, *analyze this comprehensive benediction*.

Grace is a word of emphatic import throughout the Sacred Writings. In the didactic parts of the New Testament it denotes that moving impulse of the divine mind which justifies the guilty and ill-deserving from an exclusive regard to the redemption of his Son, and not for any works or righteousness of their own. While it

never loses this signification, it often comprises more ample views, and expresses *all the blessings* which God bestows on those who love his Son. Whatever they enjoy, from their first adoption into his family on earth to their admission to his glorified family in heaven, is the fruit of his rich and unsearchable grace. It was his grace that quickened them from the death of trespasses and sins, and, when condemned by a law which is holy, just, and good, that "forgave their iniquity, and covered all their sin." Severe and prolonged as their conflict is, often as it is renewed, and often as the powers of darkness seem to have gained the victory, his grace is triumphant. These outward foes and inward corruptions shall be resisted and mortified; and, though it may cost them watchfulness and prayer, suffering and tears, the dominion of the usurper shall be overthrown. Grace and sin are irreconcilable foes, and grace is stronger than "the strong man armed." From his fullness in whom all the fullness of the godhead substantially dwells, "they all receive, and grace for grace." It is grace instructing, grace preventing, grace restoring, grace supporting and comforting, and grace made perfect in weakness. From the first blossoms of hope to the riper fruit of religious experience—from the seed sown in tears to the brown and joyful harvest—each and all owe their beauty and richness to the cultiva-

tion and care of heavenly grace. When the fruit seems to wither under the winter's blast, it is but from timely, though rough pruning. Even the bitter cup, the days of darkness, the temptations that try, and the furnace that purifies—the debility, the pain, the bereavements—all that is depressing in adversity, as well as all that is cheering in prosperity—all that is plaintive when deep calleth unto deep, and all that is exulting in the glad responses when joy calleth unto joy, is but the varied expression of unmeasurable grace. We can not count its blessings, nor measure its bounty, nor estimate its value; yet the rich benediction, "Grace be with them," comprises them all: all of life, with its responsibilities and its hopes—all of death, with its tranquil confidence and its glad anticipations—all of the grave, with its triumphant resurrection—all of heaven, with its perfected joys.

And there is no *uncertainty* about it, because there is no failure in the source or in the dispenser. A covenant God is the source; all his works are known to him from "the beginning of the world," and his purposes never change. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself is the dispenser, and this unchanging method of grace was purposed in him. His blood seals it; he stands security for it; its rich blessings are his reward; "all that the Father giveth to him shall come to him,

and him that cometh he will in no wise cast out." No, in *no wise*. No way shall be found in heaven, on earth, or in hell—in the believer or out of the believer—nothing that shall separate him from the love of God which is Christ Jesus our Lord. He will establish and perpetuate his kingdom of grace in the hearts of all who love his Son. Faith lives upon this everlasting covenant when nature dies. The ever-blessed and adorable Trinity are bound by it, and the bond is as sacred as the word of his oath. Doubt and agitation have no place here. "Grace be with them:" this is the authoritative announcement. No, there is no place for Christian instability. It has no warrant, nothing to rest upon in the settled counsels of faithful, unchanging grace.

If we would be devoted and cheerful Christians, we should never lose sight of the fullness, the certainty, the gratuity of this rich benediction. It is grace, all grace—rich, free, unsearchable grace. This is a truth which lies at the foundation of the Gospel, which is throughout a system of grace, and saves from *deserved* wrath. Those who love the Lord Jesus are, and ever will be, *ill-deserving*, because they have sinned against God; and because "every sin *deserves* his wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come." The effective atonement removes the punishment of sin, but has no power or tendency

to remove its criminality, its blameworthiness, its ill-desert. Nothing removes this, or ever will remove it. The best of saints are as far from meriting or deserving the blessings of this benediction as the worst of sinners. From first to last, they are all the *gift* of God, and the gift of his free, matchless, and sovereign grace. The great characteristic of Christianity is, that it is "the free gift," the "gift by grace," and the "Gospel of the grace of God." The grand sentiment of that faith which receives it is that, the recipient is ill-deserving, and that his salvation is all of grace. From the first breathings of the new-born soul to its last thankful acknowledgments at the side of the grave, and from that last and sweet acknowledgment up to his song of triumph on Mount Zion above, his earliest and his latest, his present and his everlasting song is, "Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name give all the glory, for *thy mercy* and thy truth's sake!" It is through another's deserving, and not his own—another's conflicts with a violated law, with death and hell, and not his own—another's victories, and not his own—that sin has not dominion over him while he lives, death has not dominion over him when he dies, and hell has not dominion over him when he lies in his grave. Grace is the character of his hopes—present grace and everlasting grace, because there is present and everlasting ill

desert. Oh, how it will add to the *humility* of those who love the Savior, and how it will add to their joys, to cast their crowns at the foot of the throne, and ascribe all the glory to the Lamb that was slain!

“Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.”

Such is the character of those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and such the import of this heavenly benediction. There are three concluding remarks suggested by the preceding illustrations:

1. In the first place, how beautifully expressive are they of *the true spirit of the Gospel*. “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ!” What a sweet and lovely spirit is this! Yet this is the spirit the Gospel breathes from beginning to end. It only requires that men, fallen by their iniquity, should love the most loving and most lovely Being in the universe in order to be happy. Surely this is glad tidings; “glad tidings of great joy to all people.” Such is the religion of the Bible; and the heart of every disciple of the New Testament responds to it. What but this, my Christian hearers, would ever have subdued these hearts of stone, and “slain the enmity thereby?” What but this eternal,

all-bounteous grace, could have plucked *you* as brands out of the fire?

"Then give all the glory to his holy name,
To whom all the glory belongs;
Be yours the high joy still to sound forth his fame,
And crown him in each of your songs."

We remark,

2. In the second place, that our subject exhibits the *faithfulness* of the Gospel. It makes a difference "between the precious and the vile." Its benedictions belong only to those who love Jesus Christ. This is just as it ought to be. We all feel that it would not be right to lavish them on any others. God's nature forbids it; the "righteous Lord loveth righteousness." His law forbids it; his Gospel forbids it; reason and conscience forbid it. "That the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee; shall not the Judge of all the earth *do right*?" This would be a disregard of all moral rectitude, and a breaking down of all moral distinctions. God has not denied himself in the revealed conditions of salvation. He is reconciled to men only as they are reconciled to him whom he has sent. The proof and expression of their reconciliation to *Him* is their love of *his Son*. His Son must be welcomed, and loved, and trusted in. His redemption is of no avail to those who will not love and "will not come to him that they might have life."

3. In the third and last place, our subject furnishes an *obvious test of Christian character*. We began our discourse with this thought, and we repeat it at its close. Our love to Christ decides our character. It is in the highest degree indicative of character, and shows a state of mind that puts some just estimate upon all moral objects, and upon all objects in a moral view. Jesus Christ is "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely;" he is the "first Fair and the first Good." If we *love* him, we shall be willing to part with all things for him; we shall keep his commandments; and this will show to ourselves and others that we are his true friends and followers. Love to Christ is infallible evidence of having passed from death unto life, and all real Christians have this infallible evidence. They may be involved in darkness; but, if they would inspect their hearts honestly and impartially, they would discover that they are born of God.

With the same certainty, those who *do not* love the Savior may discover their true state of mind and their real character. They have clear and convincing evidence that they are not Christians. Some think they love him who do not love him. Some profess to love him who do not love him; but, if they would honestly and impartially inspect their own hearts, they might know that they love themselves and the world more than Christ.

None of us ought to remain in a state of uncertainty in this matter. It is not a question of indifference whether or not we love him whom God the Father loves, whom angels love, whom millions in heaven and on earth love, and make him their joy and crown. A state of uncertainty on this great question is not only an unhappy, but a sinful and dangerous state of mind. The man who *loves* Christ ought to know it, and the man who does *not* love him ought to know it. Not to love *Him*! oh, what a state of mind and what a character is this! Conscience cries out against it. Heaven and earth cry out against it. The Lamb of God, that mighty Sufferer, cries out against it. We set him before you to-day, and ask you why you do not love him. *Why? why?* "What evil hath he done?" On the one hand, we rehearse to you the cheering words, "Grace be with *all them* that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" and, on the other, the faithful and fearful declaration, "If *any man* love not the Lord Jesus, *let him* be ANATHEMA." Beloved hearers, will you choose the blessing or the curse? Oh, ye who "have hated him without a cause," behold this Lamb of God, and *love him*. Behold this bright image of the ineffable glory, and *love him*. Sinners and vile as you are, you may go to God through him. Living and dying, go to him. Little do you think what Christ is worth

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upon the bed of death. Living and dying, all grace be to them who love him! All glory to them who love him! No, no; rather, all glory to *him* who taught them to love him, and made it their joy, their sweetest heaven to see him extolled and honored, and to extol and honor him world without end. Amen.

With this Benediction the author takes leave of his readers. Although there is little doctrinal discussion in these volumes, it has been the design of the writer to inweave throughout the whole the great and fundamental principles of revealed religion, and without obscurity or abstruseness. As "pulpit ministrations," they are less compact and more discursive than a logical and critical reader would desire. They have been selected from several thousand manuscripts, and with no small embarrassment in the selection. God's truth can not be made acceptable to a world that lieth in wickedness; yet is it only by "a whole faith in a whole Gospel" that the word of the Lord has free course and is glorified. God's truth illustrated and enforced has been the author's aim, "whether men will hear or whether they will forbear." A different kind of preaching prevails at the present day from that which prevailed when the writer entered upon the sa-

cred office, and he is free to express his preference for the "good old way." Is there no reason for solicitude, lest the tendency of the modern pulpit to deify humanity and the principles of natural science should insensibly lead to a disclaimer of the supernatural in religion, and, instead of Christianizing natural science and humanity, should naturalize Christianity? Would that the youthful ministry more fully understood that the great object of their ministrations is to "turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God!" The noble pulpit of the Scottish Church, with such exceptions as Chalmers, Thomas Guthrie, Candlish, Cunningham, and M'Cheyne, so far as my knowledge extends, does not give forth the same utterances it gave forth in the days of Boston, William Guthrie, and the Erskines. It does not abound in those searching truths and earnest appeals that crowd the conscience of unrepenting men. The same is true of our own favored Church. The days of Edwards, Dickenson, the Tennents, Dwight, Nettleton, Griffin, Mason, Alexander, Humphrey, and M'Dowell are gone by. Not a few Christian men, and even some instructors in theology, frown upon, rather than encourage such preaching. It was not so in the former days; it will not be so when the Spirit of the Lord is poured out from on high!

The author has now entered upon the eightieth year of his life, and the fifty-fifth of his ministry. These discourses are probably his last work. With profound gratitude to the God of Zion for having been called to the ministry of his dear Son and been continued in it so long, and with humbling views of his own shortcomings, he solicits for them the divine favor, and the impartial regard of all who love the truth as it is in Jesus.

Brick Church Chapel, April, 1864.

THE END.