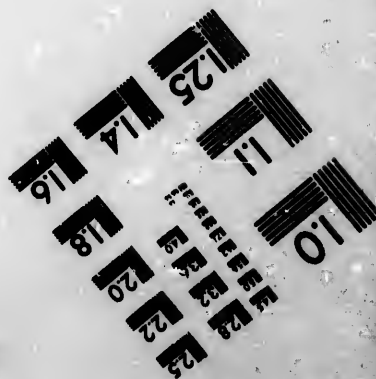
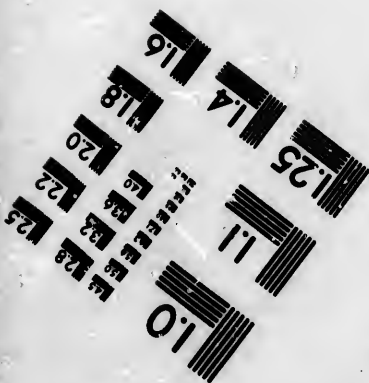
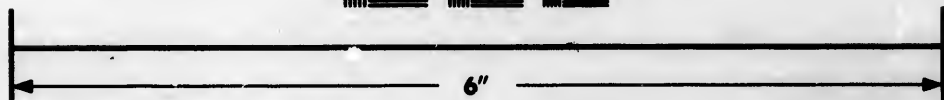
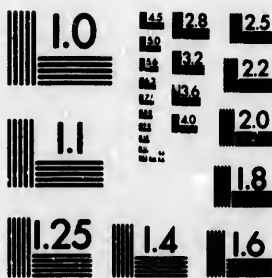


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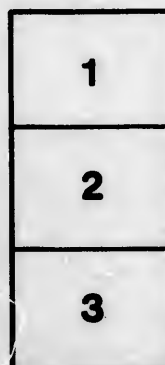
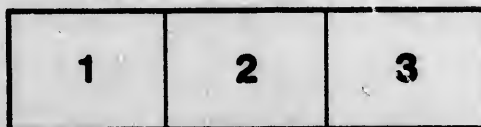
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Yours Affectionately.
M. G. Stack

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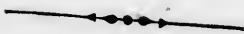
Rev. Mark H. Stark, A. M.,

FORMERLY MINISTER OF KNOX'S CHURCH, DUNDAS.

WITH MEMOIR,

BY

THE REV. WILLIAM REID, A. M.



TORONTO:
JAMES CAMPBELL & SON.

1871.

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PREFACE.

THE Sermons in this volume, although prepared with care, as were all the sermons preached by Mr. Stark, were not written with a view to publication. Had they been subjected to the revision of the Author himself, no doubt some blemishes would have been removed, and the style in some respects improved. As they are, they are now sent forth, in the belief that they will be acceptable to many, especially of those who enjoyed, statedly or occasionally, the ministrations of Mr. Stark, and with the prayer, that they may not only serve to awaken tender memories of the past in the hearts of some who may peruse them, but may be the means, through the blessing of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit, of arresting some careless ones, instructing inquirers, and comforting and edifying believers.

W. R.

TORONTO, FEBRUARY 1871.

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MEMOIR.

MARK YOUNG STARK was born at Dunfermline, Scotland, 9th November, 1799. His parents were of high respectability, and had a large circle of connections, some of them occupying important and influential positions. His grandfather was minister of the Parish of Tullybole, and his father was proprietor of the Brucefield Linen Works, at Dunfermline. His mother, originally Miss Young, of Cleish Castle, died while he was still an infant, and, after her death, he was under the care of his aunt, Miss Young. After a time, his father married Miss Bannatyne, daughter of Dugald Bannatyne, Esq., of Glasgow, a well-known and highly respected citizen, whose writings on Political Economy and kindred subjects attracted much attention at the time. Mark's step-mother, who recently died at a very advanced age, was all that a mother could be to her own son. After the death of his father, which took place in 1812, Mark was brought up almost entirely in the family of Mr. Bannatyne. His early education was principally received at a school in Essex, England, where he made great progress, especially in

classical studies. He afterwards passed through the ordinary course of the University of Glasgow, where he took the degree of M.A., in 1821. He studied Theology at the same University under Dr. Stevenson Magill and his colleagues in the Theological Faculty, and after the usual trials, was licensed to preach the Gospel in 1824, by the Presbytery of Glasgow in connection with the Established Church.

After finishing his Theological studies, he acted for some time as tutor in a family of high respectability, a position for which his superior scholarship, his excellent character, his cultivated manners, and his varied accomplishments peculiarly fitted him. He was highly esteemed both by the parents and by his pupils, who learned to look upon him in the light of a valued and trustworthy friend. He was more than once on the continent, traveling through France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. As he remained for a considerable time at some of the principal cities which he visited, he had opportunities of carrying on and extending his studies. These opportunities he diligently improved, attending lectures at the University of France, as well as at Berlin. During his first visit to the Continent, he remained for a considerable time in the family of Dr. Becker, of Offenbach, with whom he contracted an intimate and lasting friendship. One winter he spent in Rome, thus having an opportunity of making himself familiar with the works of art, which are found in that celebrated city. Mr. Stark had very great taste in everything connected with the fine arts, and could use his

pencil with great effect and skill. His sojourn on the Continent gave him an opportunity of making himself a thorough proficient in the French, German and Italian languages, and of enriching his library with many works of foreign authors. It gave him an opportunity also of becoming acquainted with many eminent literary and scientific men. From his intimate friend, Sir William Hooker, he had letters of introduction to such men as Baron Humboldt, Professor de Candolle, Prof. Roper of Basle, &c.

While Mr. Stark was a probationer, repeated prospects were presented of a settlement in the Church of Scotland, but while he was highly esteemed wherever he was known, the hopes of his friends in regard to his settlement in Scotland were not realised. He then began to think of Canada as a field of labour, and, in 1833, came to this Province, with recommendations from the Glasgow Colonia Society, a Society which did much about the period referred to in sending Presbyterian ministers to the North American Colonies. He brought also letters from influential friends to the Governor, Sir John Colborne, from whom he received much attention and kindness. Soon after his arrival, he was called by the congregations at Ancaster and Dundas, where he was speedily inducted as Pastor, succeeding the Rev. Mr. Sheed, who had some time before been removed by death. It may be remarked here, that the Rev. Dr. Candlish, who has been so intimately connected with ecclesiastical movements in Scotland for the last thirty years, had at one time serious thoughts of removing to Canada. An appointment to the

congregations of Ancaster and Dundas was offered him by the Glasgow Colonial Society,—the active Secretary of which, for many years, was the late Dr. Burns, then of Paisley. The writer of this has read several letters which passed between the Secretaries of the Society and Mr. Candlish. Ultimately the appointment was declined. We find, however, in a letter from one of Mr. Stark's correspondents in 1834, the following sentences:—"The accounts of your success, and of the prosperity of the country, have set many of the young ministers to think of following you. My cousin, Robert Candlish, if he had not got the assistantship of St. George's, Edinburgh, would, I rather suspect, have gone out." At the time referred to, there were but few Presbyterian ministers in the western part of Canada, and these were very widely scattered. The Presbytery of Hamilton extended from Lake Ontario to Amherstburgh. For a short time Mr. Stark had but few fellow-labourers within reach. Soon after his settlement at Ancaster and Dundas, the late Rev. Alex. Gale was settled at Hamilton, Mr. Stark conducting the services at his induction. The Rev. W. Stewart, then minister of the congregation at Galt, was appointed to take part in the induction services at Hamilton. But, as we learn from one of his letters to Mr. Stark, he had to excuse himself from the duty, on the ground that it was out of his power to reach Hamilton. He was not able to walk, and he could not get a horse at Galt or in the neighborhood, for love or money. As for a public conveyance from Galt to Hamilton, there would appear to have been

nothing of the kind at the time. Other congregations were from time to time organized, and other ministers settled. In the life of a minister in Canada, in such a situation as that occupied by Mr. Stark, there are not usually many incidents of importance to note. Ordinary ministerial work, pastoral visitation, and occasional missionary tours—somewhat more arduous thirty or forty years ago than they are now—filled up the time of the minister, leaving but little leisure for anything beyond the proper work of the ministry. In everything connected with his work, Mr. Stark was diligent, faithful and conscientious, and enjoyed, in a very large degree, the affection of his people, and the respect of the community.

Soon after his settlement he was united in marriage to the partner, whose labours, for upwards of thirty years, lessened his own cares and toils, and whose active mind, and bright and joyous disposition, sustained and cheered him amidst his arduous and sometimes discouraging duties. His married life was a singularly happy one. He was a most loving and affectionate husband and father, and his home was the scene of as much pure and unalloyed pleasure as falls to the lot of most.

When the disruption in the Church of Scotland took place in the mother country, in 1843, and was followed by a similar division in Canada, in 1844, Mr. Stark, although always disposed to be a peace-maker, was quite decided in adhering to the party sympathising with the Free Church. He occupied the Moderator's chair of the last Synod held before the disruption, and was chosen

Moderator of the first Free Church Synod in Kingston, in 1844. The situation was one of great delicacy and difficulty ; but he never hesitated in the path of duty, and was resolved, by the grace of God, to adhere to the principles which he regarded as scriptural and authoritative. Mr. Stark's people did not all adhere to him, and he, and those adhering to him, had to give up the churches in which they had formerly worshipped. Ere long a church was erected at Dundas, and a hall fitted up at Ancaster, and in these places of worship Mr. Stark continued to minister as of old, his instructions, according to the testimony of friends, acquiring a still more earnest and experimental character. After a number of years, he made arrangements for confining his labours to Dundas, the members of his congregation at Ancaster uniting with the other Presbyterians in the neighbourhood in forming a Charge, over which the Rev. J. Lees was afterwards inducted. In this arrangement Mr. Stark cordially acquiesced.

In the summer of 1853, Mr. Stark, accompanied by Mrs. Stark, visited Britain, and spent most happily some months with their friends in Scotland and England. They returned from this visit greatly delighted with all that they had seen, and with an increased measure of health and spirits.

About the time of the Union, in 1861—an event at which Mr. Stark heartily rejoiced—he began to think of retiring from the active duties of the ministry—his health, which was never very robust, becoming somewhat infirm. In the course of the year 1863 he tendered to the Presby-

tery the resignation of his Charge. Many of the friends of Mr. Stark in the Presbytery, and throughout the church, would have wished that he should still retain his connection with a congregation to which he had so long ministered. They thought that such a position would have been a graceful tribute to Mr. Stark's worth. But he chose to tender his resignation absolutely ; and the Presbytery, after making arrangements with the congregation as to a retiring allowance, accepted the resignation. Wishing, however, still to retain the benefit of Mr. Stark's presence and counsel, the Presbytery made application to the Synod for leave to retain his name on their roll, as a minister without a Charge—an application which the Synod cheerfully and unanimously granted.

Being relieved from the duties and care of pastoral work, Mr. Stark was permitted to enjoy a period of improved health. He preached occasionally in vacant congregations where his services were required, and during the vacancy at Dundas, performed many duties among his former flock, both public and private. It gave him great pleasure when the congregation, after a considerable interval, succeeded in obtaining the services of the Rev. J. McColl, who was ordained as pastor in October, 1865, and he gave the new pastor a most hearty welcome. It was hoped by Mr. Stark's friends that, being now relieved from the regular work of the ministry, the duties of which he had hitherto most conscientiously discharged, his health might improve, and that he might be spared amongst them for a number of years. But it was otherwise deter-

mined. At the beginning of 1866, Mr. Stark was more than usually well. He went to Woodstock to visit his eldest son, and, after spending a few days very happily with him, he went to Galt, to spend a few days with his youngest daughter. While there, he preached on the evening of the 7th January, in Knox's Church, where he had officiated not unfrequently during the vacancy before the settlement of Mr. Smith, and always with great acceptance. This was his last sermon. On the following day he went home, leaving Mrs. Stark in Galt. On his arrival at Dundas he felt well, and attended a Union prayer meeting—it being the week of prayer. On Tuesday he went to Hamilton to attend a meeting of the Presbytery, walking to and from the railway station, both at Dundas and Hamilton. Having returned home in the evening, he again attended a prayer meeting. On Wednesday evening he attended another meeting in his own old church—St. Andrew's Church—and took part in the exercises with an unction and a fluency which were remarked by several who were present. On going to his own house, he found that Mrs. Stark had returned, and they sat for some time conversing cheerfully. He awoke at five o'clock on the following morning, feeling quite well, but by six o'clock he was complaining of an acute pain which had seized him in the side. After ineffectually trying some remedies at hand, Mrs. Stark called in the doctor—Dr. M'Mahon—who pronounced the disease pleurisy, but thought that it might be subdued. A consultation was held with Dr. M'Donald, of Hamilton. The prescribed remedies were

used, and there seemed to be an alleviation of the symptoms, but his prostration was very great. There followed two weeks of much suffering, with occasional intervals of comparative comfort ; while alternating hopes and fears filled the hearts of his family and friends. In the midst of all, he was tranquil and peaceful, taking great delight in listening to passages of Scripture, and to some of the sweet hymns in the little book, "Able to Save," which were read by Mrs. Stark. On the afternoon of Tuesday, the 23rd January, he appeared to be worse, and on Wednesday the doctor had no hope that he could survive twenty-four hours. The day was spent amidst much suffering, which was, however, alleviated towards evening. His worldly affairs had been previously settled, but he wished some little change made, and was able to have his wishes carried into effect. He was perfectly conscious of his approaching change, and, expressing his firm reliance on Jesus, longed for deliverance. His prayers were speedily answered. About a quarter-past 11 p.m., he gently breathed his last, surrounded by all the members of his family, except his eldest daughter, who was then in Scotland. The funeral took place on the 27th, and was largely attended, not only by the members of his former congregation, but by many friends from Hamilton and other places. The services were conducted by the Rev. D. Inglis and Dr. Ormiston, of Hamilton ; Rev. G. Cheyne, of Binbrook ; and Rev. J. K. Smith, of Galt ; Mr. M'Coll, the minister of the congregation at Dundas, being unavoidably absent.

Mr. Stark was a man of good natural talents, superior scholarship, and of varied and rare accomplishments. He was a proficient in several branches of natural science, and was especially an accomplished Botanist. He had frequent letters, long after he came to Canada; from Sir W. J. Hooker, Professor of Botany at Glasgow, and afterwards Director of the Royal Gardens at Kew. Mr. Stark was, indeed, peculiarly rich in friends and correspondents, many of them being men of eminence in their respective departments. Through his own family, or that of his step-mother, he was connected with Sir George Napier, Professor Dugald Stewart, Sir William Hamilton, and other men of eminence. With these, and with many other well known men, among whom may be mentioned Rev. Dr. Stewart, of Erskine, Rev. Dr. Lockhart, of Glasgow, Rev. Dr. Muir, afterwards of Edinburgh,—Mr. Stark kept up occasional correspondence. It might be interesting to give some of the letters included in Mr. Stark's correspondence; but this would unduly extend this memoir. We simply give a letter or two of Sir W. J. Hooker's:—

GLASGOW, Sept. 7, 1835.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have long wished and intended to do myself the pleasure of writing to you, particularly on botanical subjects; and I have a double reason for doing so just now, when I can write to you of a new plant which has been found somewhere in your neighbourhood, I believe (for I do not exactly know your *habitat*), and when I can offer you my congratulations, as I do most sincerely,

upon the occasion of your marriage. This is a piece of intelligence that has given all your friends pleasure on this side of the Atlantic, and I am much mistaken if the circumstance be not productive of very great happiness to yourself.

Occupied, as you must have been, in your ministerial and other duties, I can hardly suppose you have any time to devote to natural history.—Still you cannot fail to have noticed a vegetation totally different from that of Europe. In that vegetation I am particularly interested ; and it has often struck me that the southern parts of Canada, which, I believe, is your district, must contain some plants perhaps new to America, and, at any rate, a good many common to the United States, but which are not yet given as inhabitants of the British possessions ; for of those possessions it so happens that the southern parts have been the least explored *botanically*. A list of its plants would be a great acquisition to us. Lately, a very respectable botanist, Mr. McNab, the son of the person who has charge of the Edinburgh Botanical Garden, visited Canada and the United States, and he has added several species to the Canadian Flora. But of all the plants he brought over, none gratified me more than a plant of the *Valerian* kind, which he found “on the banks of the Maitland River, near its embouchure, at Goderich, Upper Canada.” Now, are you not somewhere in that vicinity ? I think it belongs to the genus *Patrinia*, a genus till lately supposed to be peculiar to Siberia ; but of which I have recorded one species as having been found by Douglas on the

west side of the Rocky Mountains. Unfortunately Mr. McNab brought away with him only one specimen, and that not in flower. That, too, he very properly keeps himself, so that I cannot describe it accurately. Valerians are rare in North America, of any and every kind; so that if you chance to see this, you will be struck with it,—for the inflorescence, I apprehend, when perfect, to be not much unlike that of *Val. officinalis*; but the leaves (mostly radical) are almost, or quite entire, lanceolate, rarely divided into a few segments, in a somewhat pinnated manner, and they are ciliated at the margin. The root is large and fleshy, and is said to smell like that of true Valerian. Now, should such a thing fall in your way, pray dry for me some 20 or 30 specimens. My two ablest North American collectors have both lately perished in a very melancholy manner. Mr. Douglas, after having again gone out to explore the Pacific side of North America, and made many interesting discoveries both to the north and south of the Columbia—particularly in California—went to the Sandwich Islands, and while out on an excursion, had the misfortune to fall into a trap where was a wild bull, which immediately despatched him. Drummond (who was assistant naturalist in Franklin's Expedition) was sent out by me and other friends to Louisiana, and after that to Texas, in Mexico, in which latter country he spent two years most successfully, as far as natural history was concerned. He then went to Cuba, and was carried off by fever, after braving dangers and diseases of every shape in worse climates than Cuba. The

loss of these men is severely felt by me, for they have left few equals, as collectors. Of Drummond, I have given some account in a botanical journal in which I am engaged; and the Horticultural Society of London, in whose service Douglas was, have entrusted me with all his journals, so that I am preparing a memoir of his life for the same work. I wish you would send me some little account of the vegetation of your part of America, of which you might make an interesting paper. Have you any botanists in your neighborhood, any ornithologist, or any entomologist. These three branches are now pretty extensively cultivated in my family, and we are glad of correspondents in those branches. My eldest son, William, has a good collection of birds, and my second son, Joseph, studies insects and plants most zealously. The mosses, I recollect, used to be objects of your attention, and I think you would find some very excellent ones in America. I think I have about 300 species from different parts of North America; but I believe that Canada and the northern parts of North America produce twice as many as the south. Drummond gathered 200 species in the British settlements, and about 60 in Louisiana and Texas, during the same length of time. If you, or any other American botanist, desire plants of America different from those of your vicinity, I shall be glad to supply you.

Your friend Arnott is becoming a great author, and, I think, has done much more since he has been a family man than before. He and Dr. Wright have published the first volume of their *Flora of the Peninsula of India*, which

is very creditable to them both. He was here about two months ago, to meet Bentham, his *compagnon de voyage* in the Pyrenees, who has now come into large property by the death of his uncle, the celebrated Jeremy, and who is now, like Arnott and yourself, a married man.

Your friends here are hoping that you and Mrs. Stark will come and visit them. Indeed, if you do not make haste and do so, you will hardly know the old city again. In a few year's time, streets and squares will extend as far as the Botanic Garden. Your family have removed into Blythwood Square, and I am in a range of houses (the Crescent), almost within a stone's throw of the Botanic Garden ; and new houses are springing up on every side of me. The College, too, is undergoing a reform, in these radical reforming times, and Dr. Thomson has undertaken this Herculean task, backed by our present members, Oswald and Dunlop. I need not tell you how frightened are our Conservative Principal and Professors.

But as to Glasgow news, you will hear what will interest you much more than anything I can say from your own family ; but you will recollect it is not so with me in regard to your country, and I shall be most happy to hear from you, and of all that concerns you. Pray accept my father's and Mrs. Hooker's kind regards and best wishes, and believe me to be, my dear sir, most truly and faithfully yours,

W. J. HOOKER.

In a letter dated 30th Sept., 1840, Sir William, after referring at length to a series of afflictions in his family, the

first being the loss of his eldest son, a most promising young man, who had been cut off by yellow fever in Jamaica, not long after his marriage—speaks of changes in the University of Glasgow, especially in the medical department, which he felt were unfair to himself, and at variance with what he understood to be pledges, when he accepted the chair of Botany, and proceeds to speak of his future prospects and purposes as follows : “ You will not wonder that I am anxious to separate myself from my present colleagues ; and, happily, I am powerfully recommended to an appointment in the Royal Gardens at Kew, a situation in every respect most agreeable to my wishes. I trust, by next year, to be located there. My chair would still be most acceptable to your old friend, Arnott. I only grieve to see the College is, in my opinion, doing everything in its power to lower the character of the medical curriculum, in the vain hope of increasing the number of graduates. I send you a little memoir (unpublished) of the late Duke of Bedford, and a still smaller tract on Norway, by my late son.

I have completed my Flora of British North America, in 2 vols., large 4to, with 240 plates of mostly new species. The plates are paid for by Government. If you or your friends can find time for botany, you may, I dare say, find some new species.

With Lady Hooker's and my best wishes for yourself, Mrs. Stark, and your young family, believe me, my dear friend, faithfully yours,

W. J. HOOKER.

Mr. Stark, although mild in disposition and character, was yet firm in adhering to principle. We have noticed his decided stand in connection with the disruption. A perusal of part of his correspondence has made us acquainted with another instance of firm adherence to Christian principle. It appears that before he had made up his mind to come to Canada, he was strongly urged by influential friends in England and in Scotland to enter the English Church, and a benefice, in a very desirable situation in the west of England, was offered for his acceptance, with the prospect of future preferment.—Mr. Stark was, however, too stedfast and firm in adhering to principle to accept such an offer, urged though it was by some very influential friends. He preferred to come to Canada, at a time when the hardships and toils of a minister here were far greater than they are now.

As a minister, Mr. Stark was conscientious and earnest, and specially excelled in ministering to the afflicted and sorrowing. His sermons were prepared with very great care, exhibiting in the composition a peculiar neatness and finish. They were at the same time thoroughly evangelical and practical. In their delivery, there was no attempt at effect—nothing of what is usually called a *popular* manner; but his pulpit ministrations exhibited an earnestness and an affectionate persuasiveness, especially during the latter years of his ministry, which made them very precious to those who really loved the truth. Mr. Stark, too, exhibited a higher eloquence than that of the pulpit orator—the eloquence of a uniform, steady, growing Chris-

tian consistency in his whole character and deportment. We have known few Christians, whose life and conversation have presented a more beautiful exhibition of the graces, especially the gentler graces, of the Christian life. His religious character, long beautifully consistent, had evidently, in his later years, become more fully developed. Christian friends, who only saw him occasionally, remarked how much he was growing in grace. His path was truly like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

While very diligent in the performance of the more private duties of the ministerial office, Mr. Stark was regular in attending the meetings of the Church Courts. He did not very often speak; but when he did speak, he was always listened to with the greatest respect and attention. Sound judgment, good common sense and prudence always characterized the counsels and views which he expressed. For many years he was clerk of the Presbytery of Hamilton, and discharged all the duties of that office with the greatest precision, fidelity and exactness.

Personally, Mr. Stark was greatly beloved by all his brethren in the ministry, and, indeed, by all who had an opportunity of knowing him. He was so unselfish, so modest, so amiable, so thoughtful of the feelings of others, that it was impossible to know him and not love him. His memory still diffuses the sweet fragrance of many graces. May we be enabled to follow him as he followed Christ; and may the removal of so many of our older ministers, one after another, lead those who remain to be

more and more earnest and diligent in their work. The time is short ; the day of work is far spent, and the night is at hand. May we be “stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.”



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SERMONS

BY THE

REV. MARK YOUNG STARK, M.A.

SERMON I.

"Thy blessing is upon thy people."—Ps. iii. 8.

THESE words have a general application, independent of their particular reference to the individual case and circumstances of David, or whoever the writer of the Psalm may have been, and are calculated to suggest to us many important truths and lessons. In dependence on the blessing of God, I would now endeavour to expound them to you in this light, for our mutual edification and comfort. The words contain a promise made to a certain class of persons. Let us, in the first place, consider who are the persons to whom the promise is made; and, in the second place, the promise itself.

In the first place, then, who are the persons meant? They are called the people of God. The Jews were called the people of God. He separated them from among the other nations for Himself as a peculiar people, that they might be a means of preserving His name and worship in the world, and of bringing about the accomplishment of His

promise to the Patriarch Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. But it is evident that our text does not refer to the Jewish nation. Our Lord characterized many among the seed of Abraham after the flesh, as the children of the Devil, and declared that God would bring many from the *east and from the west*, from the *north and from the south*, who should sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in His kingdom. He told them that their outward privileges were not only in vain, but would bring upon them a heavier condemnation, unless they profited by them, and evinced that they were the children of God by obeying His will and keeping His commandments. The Pharisees, especially, claimed for themselves to be the people of God, by their rigid observance of the outward ordinances and forms of religion, saying, with a haughty assumption of superiority to others, stand back, for I am holier than thou; but with how little justice they arrogated to themselves this distinction, our Lord's denunciation of them clearly shews. There have been in all ages of the Church, and still are, those who make great professions and pretensions, saying like those of old—the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we, who have yet no claim to be called the people of God. It is not, my friends, a name, nor a profession, nor connection with any religious organization, however pure in doctrine or consistent in life its members may be; it is not baptism, nor church membership, nor a name to live; it is not a Sabbath day religion, nor services, nor works, which will give any the title to be the children of God; but only a saving union with Christ the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners, and our being “found in Him, not having our own righteousness which is by the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith”—that faith which will be manifest as the gift of God, in working by love, in purifying the heart, and overcoming the world, and in bringing all that is within us into hearty, unreserved obedience to His holy will. Those among you who are truly Christians know these things. You

have enjoyed more or less clearly the witness of the Spirit of God with your spirits, that you are the children of God. You may at times have had your fears, your disquietudes, your seasons of darkness, when Satan gets the advantage over you, and been inclined at times to cry, "Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious, is His mercy clean gone for ever?" But your hope has been in the Lord, and in returning to Him, and in looking to and resting upon Him, you have found restored peace and renewed strength, and encouragement to go forward by His grace in your Zionward journey. Through the apprehension of your weakness, you have found your sufficiency in Jesus, and needed grace and strength in Him, and the call to seek continual progress in the work of your salvation, never thinking that you have already attained, either are already perfect, but forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before, pressing on to the mark for the prize of your high calling which is in Christ Jesus our Lord; and you will have felt it to be no needless exhortation to be warned against the deceitfulness of your hearts, against the snares and temptations to which you are exposed in the world, against the cravings of your own fleshly lusts and the wiles of Satan; or to have set before you your need of constant watchfulness and prayer that ye enter not into temptation, that you keep your hearts with all diligence, and guard your words and your actions with circumspection and carefulness, that you do not belie your profession, dishonour the Saviour, disturb your peace, injure your Christian usefulness, or fall short in ought of your reward. Many are the blinding influences which lead men to deceive themselves by a profession of religion or a form of godliness, while they have never experienced the reality; and doubtless also there are not only self-deceivers, but hypocrites in the visible Church,—men who for worldly objects, and to be seen of men, seem to be religious, and may have a name to live, but are dead. Of what importance then to search and try ourselves, and to ask of God to search and try us!

It is alike fatal for us to be deceived or to deceive, for God, with whom we have to do, cannot be deceived, and will in the great day of account render unto every one according to his deeds, not as they appear to men, but as they are known by Him.

Oh, my friends, let this be the enquiry of first importance with you :—Am I among the people of God? Am I within the refuge, or yet out of Christ, in the way of life, or in the way that leadeth to destruction? Is the character which I am manifesting such as will prepare me for Heaven, or sink me in Hell? Our progress must be either in the one direction or in the other—the one which leads by the right of the great white throne to immortal glory and blessedness—the other to the lake of fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. We have sufficient warnings of danger, my friends, on the one hand, and sufficient calls and incentives on the other, to lay hold on the offered salvation while it is permitted us to do so, to shew us alike the folly and the guilt of despising them, and of thus insulting God, and treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

The people of God are not generally among the great ones of the world, for “not many rich, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” They are not always prosperous, or successful in their objects and undertakings in life. They may have many enemies who will revile and persecute them for their righteousness sake; they may fall into many troubles and have to endure many afflictions, and many trials of their faith and steadfastness; they may be among the despised and unnoticed ones of the world; they may suffer from poverty, hunger, cold and nakedness; but yet, according to the declaration of our text, as we now proceed to notice in the second place, the blessing of the Lord is upon them, for they are His people.

As I have already hinted, this blessing does not consist in outward prosperity, or in freedom from sickness and suffering, and from the ordinary trials and afflictions of

this life. For the most precious gifts of God, in His providence, are often so abused as to become a curse; while many things, which, at the time, may be regarded as evils, will afterwards be numbered by the Lord's people among their greatest blessings—for although no chastisement, no restraint upon our desires, seemeth for the present to be joyous, but grievous, yet to them that are exercised thereby, it worketh the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The promise may thus be fulfilled to different individuals in various ways, but it is absolute, and they who are the Lord's people shall never be without a blessing—for, in what they do, they seek His glory, and if God be more glorified in their suffering than in their prosperity, they will rejoice in it, and in its sanctifying influence upon their own souls. A consideration of this subject will, my friends, afford you yet further indications of your Christian state, and the means of satisfying yourselves whether the life of God has been originated and is making progress in you,—whether, in the experience of God's blessing, you have the witness within you that you are of the number of His people, that all things are working IN YOU for good, and working OUT FOR YOU that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which the Lord hath prepared for them that love Him.

Let me then observe, in the first place, under this head, that the blessing of the Lord is upon His people as regards their temporal comforts. To the ungodly, as we have said, outward prosperity is a snare. The riches, honours, and pleasures of the world enslave the carnal heart, engross the affections, and alienate them from God and from spiritual things. We cannot serve God and Mammon. Abused mercies must leave a sting in the conscience even of the worldly man, which will, sooner or later, cause anguish, and disturb or destroy his false peace—for “there is no peace to the wicked.” They will stand forth, and condemn the ungodly, in characters as legible and as full of terror as the writing on the wall at the feast of Belshazzar. But however poor the circumstances, however hard the

lot, however scanty the fare of the godly man, he enjoys a blessing with what he has—for the Lord hath promised to bless his bread and his water, so that these shall be more sweet to him than the chiefest dainties to those, who do not see in them tokens of the undeserved kindness of the Lord.

The blessing of the Lord to the godly man will not only compensate for his worldly deprivations and sufferings, but will sanctify and enhance his worldly blessings—for the little that a godly man hath is better than riches; and godliness, with contentment, is great gain. Youth, health, strength, will be sources of unalloyed satisfaction if they are dedicated to the Lord's service—spent in seeking good, and doing good. To the man, whose wealth has not withdrawn his heart from God, because with his heart he hath given it to his Redeemer for His glory, it will be a real blessing; so will honours and dignities, and influence, which have not been used to foster pride, but have been made subservient to the honouring of the Saviour, and the winning of souls to Him that they may be saved. Whatever talents or privileges a man enjoys, he will find his true happiness in devoting them to the services of God. It will be the token that God has blessed them to him, that he has had grace so to use them; and his reward will be in the unalloyed satisfaction that such a use of them will confer. It is because God's gifts are abused, or used to please ourselves, and not to please and glorify God, that they become a curse to many. A godly use of them will make them a blessing and a high privilege, and, thanks be to God, we do find examples, and not a few, of prosperous men, who have used the world as not abusing it, who have felt their deep and solemn responsibility, as stewards of the grace of God, in regard to all that has been entrusted to them, to seek His glory, and the good of their own souls and of their fellow-men,—men in whom Christ hath been formed as the hope of glory, whom present things have not been able to dazzle or seduce, because they sought them not as the end, but only as the means to a higher end—that

devoting all to Christ, and subordinating all to Christ, they may be acknowledged by Him in the solemn day of account as good and faithful servants. And is it not often the case, that he who dispenses freely in the Lord's cause, receives in still greater measure—for the blessing of the Lord prospers the labours of His people. In robbing God of that which He gives us wherewith we may serve Him, we rob ourselves not only of true enjoyment in the use of it, but of the promise of Him who saith:—"Come, prove me now, if I will not open the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." We have examples enough of the blessing of the Lord crowning with success the efforts of those who honour the Lord with their increase, to say that were there more faith in God, and less dependence upon ourselves or others for the accomplishment of schemes of usefulness and benevolence, there would be more success and more ample means found: for to them that seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, is the promise made not only of the life that is to come, but of the life that now is. Without His blessing, it is in vain to rise up early and to sit up late, but they who are the Lord's shall eat the labour of their hands,—happy shall they be, and it shall be well with them.

But again the blessing of the Lord is upon the trials and afflictions of His people. Unsanctified afflictions harden the heart and estrange it more and more from God. The sorrow of the world worketh death—but afflictions which are recognized as the dealings of our Heavenly Father, as the chastenings of love to warn us from the broad way of sin, and win us to the narrow way of safety and of peace, to make us depend not upon the world, but upon Himself as the only source of our happiness and safety, have quite an opposite effect. As the infliction of punishment is the sorest trial of the love of a fond and tender parent, so is it with God. He afflicteth not willingly the children of men, but whom He loveth He chasteneth, and as we might well suspect a son over whom his father will not exercise his controlling

influence, and whose offences he disregards, to have no true place in his affections,—so if we be without chastisement in the providence of God, we have reason to be anxious as to whether we are indeed the children of God, or whether He be not saying of us, as of Ephraim of old—he “is joined unto his idols, let him alone.” David was constrained to say, it is good for me that I have been afflicted; and the believer has found his sweetest joys coming from the furnace—the day of brightest peace and comfort succeeding the darkest night of sorrow.—Who that has been in the custom of visiting alike the houses of joy and of mourning, has not had occasion to mark how often the feverish unsubstantial joys of the world end in anguish and misery—while the man of God amid his afflictions, has a peace which the world cannot give, but which it cannot take away,—which supports him under all his trials, by the assurance that they are working IN HIM, a trustful submission to the Lord’s will, and working OUT FOR HIM, a glorious reward. He willingly endures the cross in the hope of wearing the crown. The brightest, the loveliest triumphs of patience, of faith, of hope, of love, are found amid the dark night of sorrow in the houses of mourning. Behold one, without a friend to cast a kindly glance of sympathy upon him, pursuing his dreary pilgrimage regardless of the cold indifference or the contemptuous scorn of the world, his heart, otherwise desolate, filled with peace, his wan countenance radiant with joy in the assurance that he has Jesus for his friend, and that, his journey ended, he will meet a cordial welcome at his Father’s house. Behold another with tears of gratitude, blessing God for the meagre repast which has been unexpectedly provided to assuage for a time the cravings of hunger, or for a scanty supply of tattered raiment, which may partly defend him from the piercing cold of a fireless room, and inclement weather, as tokens of the love of Him who hath fed his soul with bread from Heaven, and clothed him in a wedding garment washed in the atoning blood of His Son. See yet another in sickness and pain; on

his lair of straw, enjoying sweet communion with Jesus, and a foretaste of the unutterable joys of Heaven. Behold others, sustained under the most painful bereavements, by the consolations of the gospel, by the assurance that they who have fallen asleep in Jesus are with him in glory, and that after a time they shall meet again in those abodes of the blessed, where death-divided friends shall meet to part no more. Man is the crude ore, and affliction is the furnace by which the Lord separates and draws off the pure metal, and fits it for the use of the upper sanctuary. They who are before the throne of God arrayed in white, and who serve Him day and night in His temple, are they who have come out of great tribulation. They who suffer with Christ shall also reign with Him.

Yet again the blessing of the Lord will be upon His people in regard to their families. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children." God's promise to His people is that He will bless them and their seed forever. The experience of David was, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging bread." The dwellings of the righteous are Bethels—houses of God, and the blessings of His presence shall not be wanting there. Children are an heritage of the Lord, and He is a Father to the fatherless, and who, that has had an opportunity of observing, has not seen that a blessing follows, in one form or another, the members of that household where God is worshipped and honoured. Amid many trials, it may be, they have been enabled to say that the Lord hath been with them, their support and their comfort in time of trouble, and often have a father's or mother's love and prayers followed even the wanderer and the outcast with blessings—encompassed them as with a shield, and, after long years, perhaps of sin and suffering, brought them back as stray sheep to the fold. How do godliness and the hallowing influences of the domestic altar shed contentment, and love, and peace, and joy over the family

circle; and a truly Christian household will be a truly happy household, happy in the consolations and supports they enjoy under afflictions, and happy in the mutual enjoyments and satisfaction they have in all the blessings of life.

But lastly, the blessing of the Lord is upon His people, in regard to all that concerns their salvation. True, the offers of salvation are made to sinners of every class; the gospel is commanded to be preached to every creature. The means of knowledge and of grace are open to all, without money, and without price, who will come and take of the bread, and of the water of life. But notwithstanding all that has been done by the church and people of God, how many are still left in utter ignorance of the truth? There are millions and millions who have never seen a Bible—who have never had Jesus preached to them; and what multitudes are there, who will not read the Bible or attend the house of God, or who, if they do hear, hear with unconcern, or receive only what pleases them; who would have a method of salvation of their own, not God's plan; a salvation after their own fancy, not the salvation revealed in the Word. But the gospel brings no blessing from God to such—having eyes, they see not, and having ears, they hear not; they have their understandings darkened, and their privileges only involve them in deeper guilt, because they will not hear or obey the gospel of God's grace—in the midst of light they walk in darkness, and if THEY shall not escape who transgress the law even in one point, much less surely shall THEY escape the righteous judgment of God, who despise and reject His great salvation. It is the man who humbly comes to be taught by the word and spirit of God, in the whole will of God, who alone shall have the blessing of God upon his endeavours. It is the contrite humble penitent who shall obtain pardon. It is he who under the heavy burden of his sins seeks deliverance, not alone from the condemnation, but from the power of sin, and who comes to be saved by grace through faith, who shall find in Christ, the

Saviour whom he needs, and shall regard Him as altogether precious. It is His own people—they who humbly, believingly, earnestly seek Him, to whom the Lord gives the understanding to discern, and the will and the heart to receive His word—they alone, who hunger and thirst, will desire, and seek, and feed upon the bread and the water of life, and will experience and rejoice in the quickening and sustaining influence of divine grace.

Now, my friends, we enjoy great privileges. Our lives have been cast in an age and in a land of gospel-light and liberty. We have our Bibles, our Sabbaths, and our Church ordinances—our Sabbath-schools and Bible-classes, our social prayer meetings, and our domestic altars, and freedom to follow the dictates of our own consciences in the worship of God. We, my friends, as a congregation, have especial cause of thankfulness to the God of all grace, for His dealings towards us. During the long vacancy, we have scarcely had a silent Sabbath—the Word hath been preached, the ordinances dispensed—the regular Congregational organization and work maintained without interruption. At last the man of the peoples' choice has been granted to their wishes as their pastor, to break among them the Bread of Life; to be their teacher, their guide, and their example in spiritual things; to partake in their joys; to sympathise in their afflictions, and to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit. Each one of us should be seriously enquiring, what will be the result of these precious privileges to us in the great day of account—Shall we experience them to have been a curse or a blessing? Shall they rise against us, and condemn us—or shall they be realized as having been means towards our salvation? Shall we hear the blessed welcome—Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord! This is a very solemn matter, my brethren. Let us seek in it to be faithful to the Lord, and faithful to our souls. How then shall we obtain the Lord's blessing upon these privileges? Simply, my friends, by giving ourselves to Christ, to be His people. They who come unto

Him, He will in no wise cast out ; and He will manifest himself to His own, in another way than He doth unto the world. Humbly come, therefore, and submit yourselves to the teaching of the Word, and seek the teaching of the Spirit, that you may know alike what you are, and what the Lord would have you to do and to be. Honour the preaching of the Word as the great means appointed by God, alike for the convincing and converting of sinners, and for the edification of His church and people, in the things which concern their peace. Give all due respect and encouragement to the ministers of the Word, as Ambassadors for Christ, and commissioned to have a care for your souls. Wait regularly and humbly on the ordinances of religion, and use diligently all the means of grace—but as means only—as the channel through which the grace of God is conveyed to you. Wait patiently for the blessing from on high, that the spiritual life may be quickened and strengthened in you, by feeding on the Bread of Life. Be earnest above all in the cultivation of personal religion, by the diligent study of your Bibles, closet prayer and meditation. Strengthen the hands of your minister by prayer for him, and for the blessing of God upon his labours ; encourage him by your Godly walk and conversation, by your earnest and zealous co-operation in every good work. Consider yourselves and your substance as the Lord's, and seek to use and improve every talent as you shall wish to have done in the great day of account, remembering that to whom much is given, of them also shall much be required. Have large desires for yourselves, and if you open your mouth wide, the Lord will fill it. Have large desires for Christ, and He will supply all your need. Never think that you can do enough for Him, or ask too much from Him, for his glory. We are not straitened in Christ, my friends, but only by our own want of desire in seeking, and of faith in asking. And as we must have been brought, my friends, under the sense of our need, to Jesus as our Saviour, in order to our receiving the blessings which He hath purchased for

His people at the price of His own blood, so they who in seeking, receive the blessing, have the best evidence of their being Christ's, in that Christ is shewn to be theirs by their enjoyment of the privileges of His people ; for the believer may either argue, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine"—that is, in having been enabled to give myself to Christ, I may lay hold of the privileges of His people ; or, "my Beloved is mine, and I am His," that is, in the enjoyment of the privileges I have the assurance of having given myself to Christ and being His. And so, my friends, if you are the people of God, you shall enjoy His blessing upon you in all that you purpose and seek to accomplish in accordance with His will ; and if, on the other hand, you experience His blessing, He is thus giving you the witness of His Spirit with your spirits that you are the children of God.



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SERMON II.

"I am the Rose of Sharon."—Song of Solomon, ii. 1—3.



WE agree with the views of those who think that the Bridegroom (Christ) speaks in the first two verses, and the Bride (the Church) in the third. It is on this supposition alone that we can find a clear and consistent interpretation of the passage; and in this view it is fraught with rich meaning and with teeming beauties. How beautiful and significant is the application of the imagery of the first verse to Christ in His glory, and in His humiliation—effulgent as the rose in His glory—pure and lovely as the lily in His humility. Sharon is frequently noticed in Scripture as a place of great fertility; it is mentioned in the Book of Chronicles as the place where the herds of David fed. In Isaiah, when the prophet describes the flourishing of Christ's kingdom, by saying that "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose," he says in connection with this, "the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon," and again "Sharon shall be a fold of flocks." Gardens were and still are one of the chief luxuries in eastern countries; great pains and expense were bestowed upon their cultivation and adorning. There was great variety in these gardens—there were parterres of gay and gorgeous flowers, breathing forth their fragrant odours; there were majestic terraces along the mountain slopes, enjoying the cool breezes and expanded views of the scenery of the surrounding country; there were the shady retreats of the lower valleys, with the soothing murmurs of the rippling stream, or the fresh coolness of the gushing fountain; but we do not think that, frequently as the imagery of their poets is drawn from these scenes of luxurious enjoyment, it is so in our text. It seems that Sharon was a district where the rose peculiarly flourished, and that it was

from its natural luxuriance, amid its native wilds, that the emblem is taken, for it is conjoined with the lily of the valleys, the lily among the thorns. And it is in His own native glory that Christ is designed to be exhibited to us—as that which He was not by culture, but by His own inherent perfection. He is everywhere shadowed forth in Scripture under the type of whatever is most glorious and excellent in nature. As the sun is prominent among the Hosts of Heaven, so is He described as the Sun of Righteousness. Among the beasts of earth, the lion, the most noble, the most powerful, lends Him its name, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And thus in our text, the rose of Sharon, which seems to have been proverbial for its richness and magnificence among the many varieties of that superb tribe of flowers, no less remarkable for their stately beauty, than for their rich and delicious fragrance, is selected to represent the perfections, the loveliness, the redolent graces of Him in whom is treasured up all the fulness of the Godhead, bodily. But He is not only represented in His glory by the rose, but in His humiliation by the lily, among the thorns—the more lovely, and attractive from the contrast *which He exhibited to men around Him*, and amid all the rudeness, the reproach, the sufferings which He endured in the world. How aptly is He represented by the lily among the thorns—that lily to which Solomon in all his glory was not to be compared. But, my friends, no imagery can adequately show forth the glory and the attractive loveliness of Him whose perfections surpass knowledge. From whatever view we regard Him in His original condition—in His humiliation or in His exaltation, He is invested with garments which, like those made for Aaron and his sons of old, were for glory and for beauty. In His person He united all the attributes of the Godhead with every grace in its highest perfection which could adorn humanity. In His offices He is all that His Church can need, or His people desire. Men are by nature and transgression condemned under sin, and dead in sins; but He became an atonement for

the sins of men. He made an end of sin by the sacrifice of Himself, magnifying the law and making it honourable, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, which should be unto all them and upon all them that believe ; and no less is He made sanctification to His people and redemption. There is now no condemnation to them that believe, and sin shall not have dominion over them, for they are no more under the law, but under grace. He is their prophet to instruct them in the way of life—their forerunner who is entered into glory—their Mediator who hath appeared before God for them, through whom they may approach God with acceptance, and obtain an answer to their requests. And He is not only a Prince and a Saviour, but He is King in Zion to defend, to keep, to reign over, and to bless His ransomed people. Truly, my friends, may the believer well exclaim—" He is fairer than the children of men ; the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely—all my salvation and all my desire."

Having spoken of Himself, the Bridegroom next speaks of the Church. He calls her His love, and He compares her with Himself, not as the rose in its glory, but at the lily in its meekness, and as the lily among thorns ; for as He was on earth, so are His Church and people in the world. Though in it, they are not of it. They are among thorns ; but they are lovely in their resemblance to Christ, in the meek graces and adornments of the Christian character. As Christ humbled Himself, so are His people humble—bowing their heads like the lily—they claim no worthiness of their own ; all their glorying is in Christ, not having their own righteousness, which is by the law, but the righteousness of God which is by faith—glorying alone in the work of Christ in them, in reflecting the image of Him who hath ransomed them to Himself for His own glory. It is because He hath sanctified it to Himself, that Christ loves His Church ; it is because, as the lily among the thorns, so is she among the daughters, that He is so concerned about her, so careful of her. It is because as He was in the world, so is she ; and He

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rejoices in her beauty, and her meekness, and her purity, and in beholding her grow and triumph in her loveliness, amid the trials and persecutions of the world, through the triumphs which He, while in the world, wrought out and accomplished for her, that He might purify and prepare her unto Himself, a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, and as a bride adorned for the bridegroom. How great, my friends, is the contrast between the world and the true Church of Christ,—not the sects and denominations of man’s building up, which arrogate to themselves the appellation of the Church of God, but the hidden ones of every nation and kindred and family, in whose hearts the Lord hath prepared a dwelling for His Holy Spirit, and on whose foreheads He hath written His own name, and whom He will gather from the north and from the south, and from the east and from the west, and make to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. Some of these may be known even here—those whose righteousness is manifest beforehand, in whom the graces of the Christian character are prominent and remarkable, of whom it may be clearly discerned that they have been with Jesus—that they have been transformed by the renewing of their minds into the same image, and exhibit the indwelling power of His spirit in the fruits which they bring forth, and whose graces shine the more from their position in the world, and their contrasts with those around them. The world is as thorns, rude, noxious, overbearing ; the sanctified believer, meek, lowly, unobtrusive, pure—the one arrogant, selfish, living for their own glory, seeking their own praise, dependent on their own sufficiency—the other acknowledging their all to come from God, and to be of grace, and seeking the honour of the Redeemer—that He may be magnified in them. Enmity to God actuates the world ; love constrains the Christian. The one makes little or no acknowledgment of God in the most sacred duties ; the others carry their sense of God’s presence, and of their own responsibility into the most

ordinary affairs and concerns of life. The one struggles on fruitlessly by the powers of his natural life ; in the others Christ lives, and being formed in them as the hope of glory, moulds and forms them into His own likeness, so that as He was, in His intercourse with the world, so they seek to be. As He demeaned Himself under all the varied circumstances of life, so His people strive to walk as He also walked, and in all things to be followers of Him who left us an example that we should walk in His steps. Men indeed may not always be able to discern who are of Christ as distinguished from the people of the world. But the Lord knoweth His own, and can discern the characteristics of the inner man of the heart, as distinctly as he can mark the difference between the modest, spotless lily, and the rampant briar. The tender lily may be torn and defaced by the rude contact of the thorn, but it is the lily still. So the Christian may be wounded and bruised by the buffetings of the world ; but these cannot separate him from the Redeemer, or rob him of His love. As the Redeemer's purchase, He will keep him by His almighty power through faith unto salvation.

But we now come to what the Church says of Christ ; and under this head there are three things to be noticed.

1st. The apprehension which the Church, that is to say, believers, form of Christ, "as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons." This implies a sense of Christ's surpassing excellency and value. The believer saith, "To whom can we go but unto thee ;" "there is none whom our souls desire beside thee." All other trees are profitless ; Christ is the tree of life, that is in the midst of the paradise of God, and which bears twelve manner of fruits, available for every time, every condition, every circumstance, every want of His people ; whose very leaves are for the healing of the nations. What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, Christ hath accomplished for His people. Every scheme by which men might be just

before God, has failed to satisfy, save that which points to the justifying righteousness of Christ; every plan for overcoming the world, subduing the carnal nature to the love of God, and attaining holiness, has proved utterly futile, save that which is provided in the cleansing fountain of atonement, and by the renewing power of the Holy Ghost. But never have these failed the believer; he hath ever found Christ to be adequate to all his wants, and determined to know nothing and to look to nothing for the saving of his soul but "Jesus Christ and Him crucified"—though among men, to the view of the world, He had no form or comeliness, no beauty, that men should desire Him; though "He was despised and rejected of men;" though "they esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" yet His people who know that He was wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities, that the chastisement of their peace was upon Him, and that with His stripes they were healed—behold in all the wondrous evidences of the power of redeeming love, and attestations to the perfections of Him, who, though God, "took upon Him the nature of man, that He might give His life a ransom for many."

2ndly. The Church saith of Christ, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight." The believer finds rest and shelter there, when he could find none elsewhere. He hath tried many a refuge, but found no security, no peace. He was ever troubled with uncertainties and fears; but under the shelter of Christ he feels no anxiety, but to abide in Him. He can resign himself to His protection and keeping with unhesitating confidence, assured that nothing shall harm him there. Like the hunted hare, he may have been driven from one place of hoped-for safety to another, but under the shadow of Christ's protection he can sit down with great delight, believing that there he has found a resting place from which he cannot be driven, and where nothing shall destroy his hope. How many refuges of lies do men seek after, and commit their hope to refuges which have failed all who put their trust in them,

and in which none have ever found lasting security or peace, rather than seek the alone effectual refuge of the Gospel. Strange that the carnal heart of man should be so blind that it will not learn by the experience of others to shun the dangers to which it is exposed, or to seek the only refuge of unfailing peace, approved by the testimony of every believer as one under which he hath sat down with great delight. The soul of the alarmed, wounded, stricken sinner, hunted by the stings of conscience, met at every point by the condemning sentence of a violated law, and by the threatened judgment of an offended God, can find no rest but in Jesus. But there he is secure. His own righteousness will not sustain him, and there is no place for mercy but in Christ; his repentance, his penances, or his observances cannot plead for him, but in Christ the law cannot touch him, for He hath satisfied its demands by enduring the penalty for every believer. God no longer beholds such in their sins, but in the face of Jesus, washed in His blood and clothed with His righteousness. The believer, no longer as an alien or an outcast, fears God; but, brought nigh through the blood of the covenant, he has received the Spirit of adoption, by which he cries, "Abba Father," and as a child, can delight himself in God.

3rdly. The Church experiences that His fruit is sweet to her taste. The believer requires no other food for the nourishment of his soul than Christ, and desires none other for the gratification of his taste. Christ said, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed," and every one who hath truly fed by faith upon the broken body, and the blood shed by the Redeemer, hath known Him to be "the bread of life which cometh down from Heaven." The soul truly brought to relish this spiritual food, will desire more and more of it, will hunger and thirst after it, will feel it to be more than natural food to the body, and that it is indeed sweet to his taste. We find that the worldly have no desire for this food. The Word of God is nauseous to them; they

do not like to retain God in their knowledge, because they will not give up their sins, and God condemns and threatens to punish their sins, if they will not repent and turn unto Him. They neither like to contemplate the law which accuses them, nor the Gospel which humbles them, nor the holiness of God which reproveth and restrains them. If they read God's Word, it is to try how they may refute it or evade it; not that they may be instructed how to live by it. But how different it is with the believer. He feels that he is a lost, helpless sinner, and he comes to God that he may be saved. He reads the Word that he may be taught the way of life. He seeks the knowledge of God's will, that he may do His will; to be instructed in regard to the means of grace, that he may use them. He is ever anxious to know more of what the Lord has spoken to him in His Word, that he may not err from the way of safety, or fall short of what is required of him. He is earnest to know more of His promises, that he may rest in them more firmly, and draw out of them more fully. He believes that Christ is meat, and he feeds upon Him by faith; that He is drink, and he is ever drawing out of Him, as a well spring of salvation, and of strength. Prayer in connection with God's promises, and with the use of means, and with the discharge of duty, is his unceasing resort; and it becomes as his meat and as his drink to do the will of God; "the statutes of the Lord" he experiences to be right, "rejoicing the heart," and the "commandments of the Lord, pure, enlightening the eyes"—"more to be desired than gold—yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb," and that "in keeping of them there is great reward." He can say with David, "Oh how I love Thy law; it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are Thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth; through Thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way." And so will it be with every true believer. Oh that sinners would think of this, and abandon their sins and their

wordly and carnal hopes, in continuing to rest upon which, they must perish ; and come to the refuge of the Gospel, and find rest in Jesus, and that peace and joy in believing, which the world cannot give, and which it cannot take away,—which cannot be found out of Christ, but which all will find who will follow on to seek the Lord. Oh, are there any sinners here, still out of Christ? Bep-think you of the awful condition in which the Bible declares you to be as the blinded slaves of sin and Satan, heirs of the wrath of God, and doomed to eternal death. We would entreat you, while you still may, receive the warnings, and lay hold of the invitations of the Gospel. God calls you to repentance. God offers you life. Why will ye reject and despise His grace? Why will ye not believe and turn from the evil of your ways, that ye may live, and be enabled to realize the song of the Church in your own joyful experience? “As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons.” “I sat down under the shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.” Has He not every qualification, my friends, that the soul of an awakened, helpless sinner can desire in a Saviour? Why then will any yet hide their face from their sins? Why will they deny or disclaim the leprosy which preys upon their souls, and shun the fountain of cleansing? Why will they seek to justify themselves in defiance of the declaration of God that all are sinners and all are helpless? Why will they not confess their sins and take refuge in the offers of grace? Why will they not receive Jesus, as He is freely offered to them in the Gospel for salvation? Is He not revealed, as God declared, to be the Son of God, with power, by His resurrection from the dead, and can He not, as God, pardon sin? “It is God that justifieth ; who is he that condemneth?” Did He not, in the nature of man, pay the penalty and satisfy the law? And as He died for the sins, has He not risen for the justification of His people? Does He not make the offer of salvation to all, and is it not free? Believe and ye

shall be saved ; none that cometh to Him shall be cast out, but all who humbly receive Him shall see the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus,—the rose of Sharon, in its kingly splendours, and the lily among the thorns—Jesus the Son of God humbled, agonized, trodden under foot of men, and offered a sacrifice upon the cross, that He might save sinners, even the chief ; and He now invites you, amid warnings of your sin, to behold in Him the mercy and the truth of God met together—righteousness and peace kissing each other—that you be led to seek the pardon of your sins, and being justified by faith, have peace with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ. My friends, we would this day, in the name of Jesus, invite you to come ; as ambassadors for Christ we would earnestly entreat you, “ Be ye reconciled unto God.” We would desire to present every one of you as a chaste virgin to Christ. We speak to you His own assurance, “ I will betroth thee unto me forever ; I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving kindness and in mercies ; I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord.” Oh, hath He not the best claim, my friends, upon your affections ? Where is there another who hath so loved you ? All other sources of dependence are broken cisterns ; they have been well proven to be so. Why then not try this ? It hath never failed. But say not—the Gospel is too free ; I must do something ; I must have something of my own wherewith to come before God. What have you, but your sins, that is not His ? You can bring nothing to him ; you need a free Gospel ; you cannot be saved without it, and it is offered to you. Why will ye not believe God, that ye may be pardoned ? Why will ye not be washed, that ye may be clean ? Why will ye not ask as helpless, that ye may draw and receive every needed grace ? Christ is willing. Why are not you ? It is because you are sinners that He offers to justify you ; because you are vile and corrupt that He offers to cleanse you ; because you are sick that He offers to heal you ;

because you are helpless that He promises to supply all your need. He hath paid the price of your ransom. Can you doubt his love? Will He not freely give you all things if only you give yourselves to Him? And oh, how rich, how precious are the privileges of believers, my friends in Christ. They can say "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Whatever He is, is for them. Whatever He has, is theirs. Whatever He does, He does for their sake. His glory He shares with them. The glory which the Father hath given Him, He hath given them.

The glory of this world and all connected with it fades and perishes; but the fragrance of the Rose of Sharon, and the sweetness of the lily among the thorns, shall never exhaust itself. The apple-tree that grows in the midst of the Paradise of God shall never wither, nor its fruit fail. He is the everlasting portion of His people, and at His right hand are pleasures for evermore. But, oh, my friends, make your title sure. Let no uncertainty hang over so important a matter. If you are Christ's, you will love Him. Your faith will work by love to the purifying of your hearts and the overcoming of the world. It will be your earnest desire to be in all things transformed into His very image; to have the same mind and the same spirit in you which was also in Him. You will feel that you can never do enough for Him who hath done so much for you. Every sin will grieve you to the heart as a dishonouring and crucifying afresh of Jesus. You will be ever watching with prayer that you enter not into temptation. You will not only not harbour any sin, any lust, any carnal affection dishonouring to or unworthy of Christ and your profession, but you will not enter into any truce with sin, any compromise with the world, to the disparaging of Christ, and the marring of your Christian character and privileges. You will be earnest to avoid even the very appearance of evil, praying for grace to enable you to be more and more faithful in adorning the doctrine and glorifying the name of the Redeemer, by

the testimony of a holy, consistent and devoted walk and conversation ; by increasing endeavours, through Divine grace, after a more and more entire surrender and dedication of your whole being to Christ ; striving alike after the meekness and purity of the lily, and never forgetting that while here in the world you are among the thorns ; that temptations and trials must be your lot ; that they who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution ; that as the world hated Jesus, that so it hates those who will maintain His honour in the world. But what though the world hate you, if Jesus loves you ? What though it desert you, if He befriends you ? If ye be persecuted for righteousness sake, "rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven." If ye endure hardships as good soldiers of the Lord Jesus, there is laid up for you "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." If ye suffer with Christ, ye shall also be glorified together. "Let every man therefore that hath this hope in him, purify himself even as He is pure." But oh, my friends, remember, that if ye, by your works, deny Him, He also will deny you. May the Lord forbid that any of you should do so, but that all of you may be brought to know the security, peace and joy in believing, of His people here ; and at last have an entrance ministered unto you into His Heavenly Kingdom, to be forever with the Lord.



SERMON III.

“ They made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.”—Song of Solomon, i. 6, last cl.



THE Song of Solomon manifestly relates to Christ and His Church,—the Church is the bride of Christ the Lamb. This similitude is frequently employed in Scripture, and serves to illustrate with great beauty, tenderness, and force, the relation, under many views, which subsists between Christ and His people. It is the illustration of this relation which gives its beauty and its interest to the Song of Solomon. Many things in it are indeed obscure, as might be expected from a poem glowing with eastern imagery, having a primary reference to the marriage of Solomon with the daughter of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and at the same time a secondary and higher reference to the metaphoric espousals of Christ with His Church. The bride in the context describes herself as black, but comely as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon; or, as it would be more plainly expressed, black as the tents of Kedar, but comely as the curtains of Solomon. This description is addressed to the daughters of Jerusalem. We are nowhere told that the daughters of Jerusalem looked with contempt upon the bride of Solomon, because of her extraction; it is not at all improbable, however, that this may have been the case, and that they may have felt what, nevertheless, they dared not shew; for the children of Israel, as the peculiar people of God, looked upon all the Gentile nations as their inferiors; and whether they were grieved at their King marrying a Heathen Princess, or one, at least, of heathen extraction—for there is a tradition that she had previously been converted to the Jewish faith—I say, whether they felt grieved at this or not, the Queen might very well be supposed to feel sensitive on this point, and

deprecate, on the part of the daughters of Jerusalem, any prejudice on account of her complexion and extraction. "Look not upon me," *i. e.* with disregard, "because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me." What follows, together with the words, "the sun hath looked upon me," would imply that she had suffered persecution from her own people—perhaps because of her love to Solomon, and her adoption of his religion. They placed her in a degrading position, as they thought, in an office which, though of real importance, they regarded with contempt. "My mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards," and then comes out the confession of a humbled, grieved, contrite heart: "but mine own vineyard have I not kept." Now, this history well represents the condition and circumstances of the Church and people of God. The whole world lay in wickedness, in the sight of God,—sunk in sin and corruption. Yet Christ chose His Bride out of the world—as Solomon chose his out of Egypt—black, but comely; black by descent; black by her condition of degradation, but comely in the sight of the Bridegroom. Allusion, we conceive, is also made to the same thing in the 8th chapter, where it is said, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" When the Beloved thus addresses his Bride: "I raised thee up under the apple-tree; thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee;" and again also, in the 68th Psalm, where it is said of the Church, "though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold;"—passages descriptive not only of the fallen and corrupt state of man by nature, but also of the glorious privileges of the Church's calling in Christ, and the preciousness in His sight of that Bride that He hath chosen out of the world, and redeemed and consecrated and ordained for Himself, through sanctification of His Word and Spirit, as a glorious Church, "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." Immediately—as soon

as His people are marked out from the world as being the objects of His love—as soon as they give themselves in love to Christ—so soon does the world show its jealousy of them. Their mother's children hate them. As our Lord said to His disciples, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." The world ever hath shown, and ever will show its aversion to Christ and His doctrine, by persecuting His people. And the Bride being in hatred, contempt, and derision, made keeper of the vineyards, is evidently indicative of the mixed feelings of aversion and contempt with which the world regards the Church of Christ, and the office which is committed to her of keeping the vineyard of the Lord;—a work which, although most essential, honourable, and dignified in itself, the world is ready enough to commit and entrust to the Church, almost, as it would seem, that they may have the better opportunity of venting their resentment against Christ and His religion by their disparagement or persecution of His servants. Then comes the humbling confession of the Church—"But mine own vineyard have I not kept." Alas, this is a melancholy, though a true confession. How far has the Church come short of the work, high and glorious in itself, though despised in the eyes of the world, which is assigned to her. Nor do we conceive that the passage refers solely to ministers and office-bearers of the Church of Christ, who, having a charge in the Lord's vineyard committed to them, may have to acknowledge and lament with deep sorrow how much they have come short in guarding and cultivating the vineyard of their own hearts. Though it does in a most peculiar and impressive manner refer to such, it refers, we believe, no less to every member of the Church and body of Christ, who, while he has a duty, and a most important duty, in his individual relation, to discharge to Christ, in regard to his Church of which he professes to be a member, has a first

duty to discharge also to Christ in reference to his own soul—the vineyard which is more peculiarly committed to him to guard and to cultivate.

This, my friends, is just the great lesson which, from the text I would desire to impress upon you at this time. Important as your duties to the Church are, and greatly as they may betoken your individual state towards Christ, I do not so much design to dwell upon these at present, as to ask you, and lead you, and entreat you, to enquire for yourselves—how you have kept your own vineyards. This is your first and great concern. If right in this matter, all else will be right. If you realize and feel the responsibility of keeping your own vineyard, you will not be indifferent or careless in regard to the vineyard of the Lord. The duty we would urge upon you is conformable to the command elsewhere given,—“keep thy heart with all diligence—for out of it are the issues of life.” It is with your own hearts that your great concern is—that they may be wholly kept for Christ, and that your bodies, your souls, and your spirits may alike be devoted to Him; and that in all that you desire, purpose or engage in, the obeying and the glorifying of Christ may be your first and chief aim. Here I would warn you against a danger by no means uncommon, and which is peculiarly pointed at by the text—the danger of being taken up with the religious concerns and interests of the Church, or of other men, to the neglect of your own—or the fancying that zeal and activity in regard to these will make up for, or excuse the neglect of your individual personal condition, its dangers, its duties, and its privileges; for, my friends, the corrupt and carnal heart of man does not like to contemplate its own state, and is very glad of any excuse to turn away its view from itself, and to blind itself to the danger of neglecting its own spiritual condition by a professed concern for the interests of religion generally, and of the souls of other men. It is, indeed, quite possible, as we find often exhibited, for a man to lament and mourn over the corruptions of the Church, or over the degeneracy of

the times, and to be taken up with and concerned about the follies and sins of his neighbours, while he altogether overlooks his own, while there is no mourning or humiliation in his heart in regard to them. In being occupied with the state of others, he excludes the view of himself; and in sensitively bewailing their vices, makes himself believe that he is humbled and grieved on account of sin, while yet his own sins, his own offences against God never raise a sigh nor draw a tear. So, also, my friends, is it common for a man to divert his attention from his individual religious duties, which are irksome and distasteful to him, by occupying himself—it may be actively and zealously—in the affairs of his Church, his congregation, or his neighbour, till all concern about himself seems to be utterly absorbed in his care of others; and at last he actually deludes himself into the belief that this spurious or false zeal is an indication of the satisfactory state of his own soul and a manifestation of interest in the service of the Redeemer, while his own heart, which he is bound first and foremost to cultivate for Christ, is left utterly unguarded and desolate, and given over as an easy prey to Satan and the world. Oh, my friends, it is altogether a different thing to talk of religion as a system, or of the religious state of the Church, or of other men, yea, even to grieve over the evils which irreligion is causing in the world and around us, and to feel the power of religion in our own hearts; for while the man truly concerned about his personal religion will never be indifferent to the spiritual interests of his fellow-men, or of the Church of Christ, it is quite possible for a man who has no religion himself, to exhibit, from various motives, zeal and activity in promoting the cause of Christ, before the world; nay, he may be thus zealous just to cover his unfaithfulness in his own individual work, to make up for, or blind himself to his neglect of his own vineyard. I do not speak now of hypocritical or worldly-minded ministers of the Gospel, who are active in building up the Church or their congregations, from such motives as

to be seen of men and to obtain praise of them; to get a character for zeal and piety, and yet do nothing to keep and to cultivate their own souls for Christ, or who seek to hide from their view their unconcern about their own state before God, their aversion to the restraints and duties, and their indifference to the privileges of personal religion, by an assumed zeal and activity in regard to the work of the Church. Strange as it may seem, there is nothing to which men are so disinclined as a care for their souls—as attention to their spiritual and eternal interests; and if they may quiet their fears in neglecting these things, by turning their view away from themselves upon others—from the humiliating task of searching out and subduing their own sins, and the reforming of their own hearts and lives, to the more self-glorious one of seeking out and bewailing the faults and reforming the lives of other men, they will readily and eagerly give themselves to the object. There is little to incite a worldly man to the unostentatious work of keeping his own vineyard, but much in the credit and applause which he may gain by zeal and activity in behalf of the cause of religion in the world—to induce him to an outward profession, while he neglects his own salvation, or trusts it to the vain hope of a mere name to live, a mere form of godliness, whilst he experiences not the power thereof. It is an awful thing to think what multitudes there may be who, either as office-bearers or individual members, may have been instruments in building up the fabric of the Church on earth, yea, who may have been instruments of bringing others to the knowledge of religion and into union with Christ—of teaching and enforcing, with convincing reasoning and eloquence, the doctrines of salvation, and yet have never themselves felt the power of the truth, and who, though they may have taught others, shall themselves be cast away. The question has been asked, and, though a quaint one, it is a very solemn and instructive one—What became of Noah's carpenters—of the numbers who must have assisted him in the construction of

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that vast fabric? We hear not of a single one being saved by it from the foretold destruction; not one who had faith to take refuge with Noah in the Ark, built by the command of God, as a sanctuary against the impending deluge, and which his own hands had helped to build. How ought this fact to impress us with the solemn truth, that it will avail us nothing to have been ministers or elders or office-bearers in the Church, or labourers in any way in the cause of the Gospel, even to have been the means of converting and saving others—to have been ever so zealous and successful in keeping and cultivating the vineyard of the Church—if we have not kept our own vineyard. The most exalted talents and gifts—even miraculous powers—can avail nothing without personal graces. The power and fervour of a Paul, the eloquence of Apollos, together with the admiration and gratitude of thousands brought to the knowledge of the truth, and a saving interest in it, through our instrumentality, were all in vain without an individual, personal interest in Jesus; for however famous a man's name in the Church, even as a successful master-builder, the ark of the Church will save none amid the devouring flood which shall come upon the ungodly, save those who enter it in faith by Christ as the door, and commit themselves to the power and grace of Him who alone can sustain it amid the deluge of Divine wrath, and guide it to a resting-place of everlasting security, for it is not the Church, my friends, but Christ alone who is the safety and the salvation of His people.

But let us now, for a little, consider what is implied in keeping our own vineyard.

1st. It is implied that there is a responsibility in doing this, beyond our own individual concern in keeping it. It is not an absolute possession of our own that we hold; it is held at the will and for the glory of another. For whom then are we bound to keep it? For none other than God the Father, the Husbandman, and for Jesus Christ His Son, the heir of the Kingdom. Believers are

saved by the grace of God ; they are ransomed by the blood of Jesus ; they are not their own—they are bought with a price—chosen out of the world—redeemed from all iniquity and purified as a peculiar people, that the Lord may be glorified in them. Men are, therefore, bound to keep their bodies and their souls too for Christ ; they are not at liberty to give them to the service of the world, of the flesh, or the devil, at their own will. God claims a sovereign property in men as His creatures, and peculiarly in His redeemed people ; and woe be to those who reject the Gospel of His grace and follow the devices and the desires of their own evil hearts ; and woe to those who, professing to be disciples of Jesus, shall mock him by a mere pretence of serving Him, or dishonour Him by withholding from Him and devoting to idols any portion of that which he justly claims as wholly His own. The Lord, my friends, to whom we must render an account of our stewardship, cannot be deceived, will not be mocked, and may not be robbed. He will assuredly require of each one of us of the fruits of the vineyard, which He hath committed to us in the great day of final reckoning, and they who are found wanting must suffer the punishment of unfaithful stewards.

2nd. But again, to keep our vineyard, implies to watch and to guard it ; to keep it safe from the depredation of thieves and the spoiling of robbers, for its lawful Lord. The heart of man too much resembles an unfenced vineyard, or one in which the fences are so feeble and so broken as to afford an easy access to every spoiler ; and if the keeper be careless or unfaithful, how shall the vineyard be kept ? Numerous, vigilant and powerful are the enemies of our souls. Sin and Satan, the flesh and the world, are up in arms against us, watching and striving to make us their prey ; they have many allies and friends within our carnal and corrupted hearts, and they have many strongholds there too. And there is need of all our energy, of all our diligence and faithfulness in the use of the appointed means, and in trust in the promised grace to subdue and

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drive them out. Oh, what a corrupt and evil nature have we! What rebellious and stubborn hearts! How ill-affected towards God, and how easily led, by fleshly lusts and worldly temptations, into the snare of the devil; and what an overwhelming work it is to keep our souls for Christ—to subdue sin and to drive out Satan, and to make room for and welcome the Saviour there. Well might we, in the prospect, say—Who is sufficient for this? With enemies without and treachery within, how shall the city be kept?

3rd. It is implied that the keeper has the power to keep the vineyard. Aut where does his strength lie? Not in his single arm—feeble against so many and such foes—but in the help and protection of his Lord. The master is bound to defend and aid His servants and tenants in keeping for Him what He hath committed to their care, and so Christ hath called no one to a warfare at His own charges. He hath required no man to take up arms in the cause, and denied them the weapons of protection and defence. He hath not required of us to keep our vineyards for Him, while he refuses the needful grace to His faithful servants. No, my friends, He will strive in those who strive for Him. He will fight in those who fight for Him. He will not suffer them to be overpowered, while they are seeking to keep for Him what is His own; in working in them to WILL, He will also work in them to DO of His good pleasure. He will make them more than conquerors. And if the Lord hath done and sacrificed and suffered so much for the redemption of men; if He hath regarded these souls of ours as so precious; if He by His work of grace hath so illustrated the guilt and the awful consequences to us of sin, how shall we be excused if we be careless in keeping what He hath ransomed by His precious blood, if we rebelliously open our hearts to sin, or shelter it there, or carelessly permit it to enter and to seduce or enslave them, to the dishonour of the Redeemer and our own ruin. A fearful responsibility thus lies upon us, to keep

our vineyards for the Lord ; never for a moment to intermit our vigilance ; never for a moment to cease our striving—far less to enter into compromise with the world or sin, even in things the most apparently trivial and indifferent, to the injury or slighting of the Redeemer, to the neglect of the duty we owe to Him, or the damaging or endangering of the interests of our souls ; never for a moment to think that our enemies are subdued, or that our strength is so established that we may rest from our warfare, or that we may dispose of the supplies of grace. These are all wiles of Satan, by which he seeks to lull us into security, that we may be more open to his attacks ; or to allure us away from Christ our defence and our only safety, that he may assail us in our own strength. But, let us not think, on the other hand, that because the warfare to which we are called is alone to be accomplished by the grace of Christ, that therefore we have nothing in it to do. As the Lord hath appointed means to be used, so it is only in and through the use of means that the grace can be enjoyed. If we are not in the use of the means, if we are not in the path of duty, we cannot expect to be the recipients of the grace. We can alone stand fast and conquer by Christ ; it is alone by Christ resisting in us and fighting in us that the victory can be obtained. Let us then, my friends, feel it to be *our* business to be watching, fighting, praying, contending for the prize. This is what belongs to us. This is essential to our safety, through grace, and the success must come from Christ. When we think what a stake is at issue, and what grace is promised to those that are faithful, what a stimulus, and what an encouragement at the same time have we to diligence, steadfastness and perseverance in keeping our vineyards against every aggressor, and to be working out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

4th. But keeping our own vineyards, my friends, implies something more than defending against enemies and spoilers ; it implies the diligent cultivation of it—the rendering of it more and more fruitful, that the increase may

be devoted to Christ—for it would be of little avail to defend it from every enemy, and leave it an uncultivated, barren, fruitless heritage. It is alone the cultivation of it for Christ that makes it worth defending for Him; and, my friends, the heart of man is a vineyard that cannot be kept for Christ without being cultivated for Him. If Satan be driven out, Christ will be welcomed in; if the enemies of our peace be subdued, Christ will be triumphant; if sin be expelled, it will be supplanted by holiness; if the enmity of the heart to God be taken away, love to the Saviour will take its place. The heart is like a rank, uncultivated soil, impregnated with noxious seeds; it must produce weeds if it is not made to yield fruits. It will either be a shelter for corrupt lusts and unruly passions and unhallowed desires—a howling wilderness which sin and Satan will claim for their own—or a garden of the Lord, in which the good seed sown by due cultivation, and the nourishment of Divine grace shall produce the fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of the Redeemer. What a work, my friends, are we here called to—not only to keep our vineyards for Christ, against every invader; not only to subdue and expel every open enemy, but to search out and drive forth every treacherous, every lurking, every dissembled foe; not only to clear the ground of all that is vile and noxious, but to cultivate it for Christ—to turn all its capacities to the best account, and to improve them all to the utmost in His service. We cannot, my friends, free ourselves from this responsibility, great as it is. We may not either abandon our vineyards as a prey to the enemies of the Lord, or fail to cultivate them to the very utmost for Him, without soul-destroying sin. Our talents are given us to use for the glory of God, and if we have failed to do so, even though it may have been but the one talent that hath been entrusted to us, the doom recorded against us is, that as unprofitable servants, we shall be cast into outer darkness, where “shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Should not the knowledge of this responsibility,

under the sense of our own utter insufficiency, drive us to the source of grace, and make us incessant in our applications there, that we may neither forget nor fall short in that which the Lord demands of us. Blessed be the Lord, that there is sufficiency in Him, and that they who will be faithful need not fail of grace to be so.

But still we must ever keep our responsibility in mind; ever seek to realize the whole length and breadth of our obligations—that we may be earnest and constant in wrestling with God in prayer for strength to be faithful and diligent in the Lord's work, and in that which is least as well as that which is much. Do not fancy, that it is a light work; a work which will do to think of by and bye, when we are done with the world's work. Oh, it is a great work—nothing less than the subduing and making over of the whole man to the service of the Redeemer,—every power, every faculty, every energy of our being—all the affections of our hearts, our thoughts, our time, our labours—that all may be redeemed from sin and given to Christ, and so cultivated and improved for His service, that He shall accept of us as faithful in the great day. We must not only subdue our own rebellious wills, but we must enthrone the will of God as supreme in our hearts. We must not only expel worldly principles, unhallowed lusts, carnal desires, and unruly passions, but we must cherish and foster every godly purpose, every pure and heavenly affection; and whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, we must think on these things and do them, just because they are agreeable to the will of God and conducive to His glory.

It is also an instant work, my friends, to which we are called, not only because now is the only time we can call our own—now is the day of working; and because we know not what shall be on the morrow; our lives may be cut short ere our work be done; but because it is a work which corresponds with the duration of our being; a work which only closes with our lives,

and in regard to which each succeeding day brings new calls and new responsibilities. Present duty is that with which we have to do, and the faithful discharge of present duty will be the best preparative for that which succeeds. The present opportunity lost can never be recalled, and will affect more or less the whole of our after work. The spring-time squandered in idleness—the time for pruning, and dressing, and digging, lost—of what avail will after labour in the harvest be. Now, my friends, is your time to care for your hearts—to cultivate them for Christ, and to dedicate your lives to Him—it is your present labour that will alone insure fruit; and if there be no fruit to present when the Lord cometh to enquire after His vineyard—how shall ye escape His just judgment?

Again, my friends, remember that, although you are the Lord's, and are bound to cultivate your hearts for His glory, with diligence proportioned to your solemn responsibility, yet the vineyard is your own; not only that which is peculiarly allotted to you to cultivate for the Lord, but that in which you have an individual and peculiar concern, of the fruit of which you shall enjoy as the result of your labours. The service of Christ is no thankless service—in keeping of His commandments there is great reward. No one ever regretted having given themselves to Christ. Your true happiness and your true good, my friends, will be found in serving the Redeemer, in your deliverance from the power of sin; in your growing conformity to the will of God; in your becoming like Christ; in your increase in holiness, and the consequent peace of an approving conscience in all that you do. In cultivating, therefore, your vineyard for Christ, you most effectually secure your individual happiness and welfare; for godliness hath the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come. There is none so truly happy under all circumstances as the godly man. There is no other peace like that of the man whose mind is stayed upon Christ. The more you bear the character, the more you will experience of the blessedness of the

children of God, of that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. Cultivate, then, each one of you, your own vineyard diligently and faithfully for Christ; seek not only to defend it from enemies from without, not only to purge it from corruptions from within, but to cultivate it for Christ to the very utmost, and without reserve—that when He cometh He may receive of His own with increase; and in doing this you will reap a harvest yourselves, for this is the great purpose which the Lord had in the accomplishment of the work of grace, that He might redeem His people from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. What a heart-rending conviction will it be when the Lord cometh to ask of you an account of your trust, if you are obliged to confess, “Mine own vineyard have I, not kept,” if, when the demand is made by the Lord for fruit, there should be none? What will it avail you to have cultivated other vineyards, or even to have been instrumental in winning and reforming and saving others—or in promoting the prosperity of the Church and cause of Christ on earth, if your own hearts have been left unguarded and desolate? The bitterest repentance and regret will avail you nothing then. The seed time is past, the summer gone, the harvest fully come, and there is no fruit. A death-bed repentance is a poor hope to look to after a mis-spent life. Oh, my friends, repent now, and resolve now, and believe now, and work now the Lord's work while you may, and your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. But if you cultivate not now your vineyard, disease may come, or cares may come and hinder the work; or temptations may come and choke the seed so that it shall prove unfruitful; or the Saviour may be grieved and grace may be withheld; or death may come and seal your condition, and force you to cry out in the agony of despair, in consequence of present negligence, “But mine own vineyard I have not kept.” Examine yourselves in regard to this matter; see that you are keeping your hearts with dili-

gence and keeping them for the Lord, and so ordering your whole life and conversation in the world for His glory, that you may at last receive the blessed welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."



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SERMON IV.

"In the morning sow thy seed."—Ecclesiastes xi., 6.



THIS, it need scarcely be remarked, is what is called a figurative expression. The word "morning" does not mean the morning of the day, but the period of the year which corresponds to the morning of the year, *i. e.*, the spring. As the day is divided into four parts, so also is the year. The morning corresponds with the spring, the day time with the summer, the evening with the harvest, and the night with winter; and this is a beautiful metaphor, applicable to the proper time for sowing seed, which, growing up in the summer, will produce in autumn those fruits which the earth bountifully brings forth by the decree of a gracious God for the support of man and beast. Yet it is not of the spring time nor of the seed sown in the ground that Solomon speaks in our text. He refers to spiritual seed, the seeds or elements of wisdom and of knowledge which are to be sown in the mind and heart of man, and while, therefore, when it is used in reference to seed, we must understand the word morning as meaning the spring, when applied to the spiritual seed, we must understand it as signifying the morning or spring time of life—the period of youth when those principles can alone be successfully implanted, and the elements of that knowledge acquired, which, while it fits for, is perfected by the duties and experience of maturer years, and gradually ripens into a harvest which will cheer and sustain when life is in the fall, and make provision for the winter of death. In commencing the course of sermons which, if God spare me, I purpose to preach to the young, I have chosen my present subject as alike appropriate to the commencement of my course—to the spring time of the year which is opening upon us, and to your period of life.

Spring ever inspires the thought of what is bright and cheerful. After the cold, cloudy and tempestuous season of winter, which binds all nature fast in icy fetters, which suspends vegetation, and congeals the rivers, and which throws a benumbing influence even over animal life and energies, has passed away, the genial sun, rising higher in the heavens from day to day, shines forth with intenser light and more grateful warmth; the springs of nature are set free, the snows and ice melt away, the streams rush and sparkle down the mountain sides, as if exulting in their freedom like a liberated slave; the pastures put on their robes of richest green; flowers of varied dye adorn the meadows and gardens, and perfume the balmy air with their refreshing fragrance; the trees of the forest, mighty pillars in the house of nature's own building, as a shelter for the innumerable tribes of earth's inhabitants, spread overhead their covering of dense foliage, and the melody of birds fills the leafy groves; the lambs gambol in the joyousness of young life; the insect throng fill the air with their happy murmurs, and every heart and every sense is joy. There are none of you, my young friends, I am sure, but must have experienced the enjoyments of this season of opening beauty and promise, when you have gone forth in the pleasant sunshine to the woods or to the fields to gather the first flowers of spring, or listen to the warbling of the birds; and I trust not a few of you at such times have had your eyes opened to see and your hearts to feel the glory and the goodness of the great God, exhibited in these His works, and to feel the call to utter forth in harmony with universal nature the Creator's praise. Insensible and selfish indeed must his heart be, who can walk amid God's works of wonder and of love, and behold and even enjoy the manifestations and gifts of His gracious providence in them, and yet not be lifted to their benevolent author in adoring thankfulness and praise.

But the spring time, my young friends, is not only a season of enjoyment—it is, in an especial manner,

a season of duty. "In the morning sow thy seed." What would be the condition of the husbandman were he to pass in sloth or in mere pleasure the season of spring? Were he to omit, or even to delay till the proper time were past, the tilling of his ground, the pruning of his trees, or the sowing of his seed, could he expect a harvest? Would not thorns and thistles overrun his fields? Would not the summer's suns and the summer's droughts stiffen his untilled lands and scorch his late-sown seed? The stunted straw would fail to mature the grain, and in harvest there would be no return even for the scanty and tardy labour bestowed; and you will allow that this would be very foolish conduct. A man thus by indolence and procrastination not only loses the benefit of his farm for the year, but he injures it for time to come; for the most productive farm will be that which, if wisely cultivated, is constantly cultivated from year to year. He loses his seed too, for it brings no return, and also the little labour which he does give, for he gets nothing for it. His spring is wasted; the summer is profitless; he has neither laboured heartily nor in season, and his labour is in vain—he has nothing to reap. So, my young friends, it is with the seeds of knowledge, whether secular knowledge or religious knowledge. In the morning, in the dawn of your day, in the spring time of your life, sow your seed. This is the exhortation of our text. Listen to me, my young friends, while I endeavour shortly and plainly and affectionately to bring before you and urge upon you some of the important lessons which it teaches. And remember that I do not speak to you now of secular knowledge and human learning—important though these be in their own place—but of religious knowledge, the knowledge of what concerns your highest interests of the way of salvation, the way by which sinners may attain pardon and acceptance with God, be delivered from Hell, the doom of the wicked, and obtain eternal life, the blessed portion of the children of God.

You all doubtless know the parable of the sower who went out to sow seed; and remember that our Lord there tells us that the good seed is the word of God, which is contained in the Bible. It alone makes known to us the way of salvation, and Jesus Christ as the only Saviour. It is the word by which you must be judged in the great day, and which will condemn us all because of sin if we believe not the Gospel. Christ desires that this word should be sown in the hearts of all men. You will remember also, I am sure, the parable of the wheat and the tares, and know that the wheat is the good seed of God's word, and the tares seeds of evil, sown in the hearts of men by the Devil, to choke, if possible, the good seed and make it unfruitful. There is good seed therefore, and there is also bad seed. In the world men do not need to sow bad seed in order to bring up weeds; the bad seed is there already. Because of Adam's disobedience, God said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground."

Only leave land uncultivated and it will soon be overrun with briars and thistles. This is the work of the Devil, but a worse work than this hath he done. He hath sown the seeds of sin in the heart of man, so that all are by nature inclined to that which is evil, and averse to that which is good, and this is the source of all sin and misery which exist in the world. And your hearts, my young friends, are just like a farm—if the good seed be not sown, the seeds of evil will spring up and occupy it. The good seed is not by nature there—it must be sown, and even be it sown ever so carefully, and however well the soil may be prepared, and however diligently it may be cultivated and the evil weeded out—the Devil sows tares so abundantly, and evil is so natural to the heart, that it will be hard to keep it down. Your hearts must be cultivated for God, or the Devil will take possession of them and claim them as his own—they must be

cultivated early, ere the seeds of evil grow and spread their roots and occupy the soil, and seed must be sown in due season, in order that it may grow and be fruitful, for spring is the season which God hath appointed and adapted for the purpose of sowing the seed. The winter hath left the soil mellow and open—genial warmth hath succeeded—the early rain moistens the ground, and the plants take root and gain strength to endure the heat of summer, which is needful to ripen the grain; and so is it with the mind and with the heart. Youth is the appointed time, and it is the best time for sowing the seed of the word. The soil is then in best order—least preoccupied with evil—the heart least hardened by the corrupting influence of the world—the mind most fresh and vigorous—the affections most free and lively, and moreover it is the appointed and appropriate work of that period of life. What ought to be done in order to be done well, must be done in its proper time, for every season has its peculiar calls—what is neglected in youth, it will be hard to overtake amid the duties and the cares of manhood or the infirmities of age. Besides, my young friends, life is uncertain. What we fail to do to-day, we may not have it in our power to do to-morrow—for to-morrow is not ours, and while we are forming idle plans and purposes of future good, God may be saying to us “Thou fool this night shall thy soul be required of thee.” About one half of all who are born into the world, die before they reach the period of youth; many more before they grow up to be men and women, and but a small number, comparatively, reach old age. You have little reason, therefore, to trust in your youth or in your present health, for to you even in an especial manner, is the warning given—“now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation;” “the night cometh when no man can work.” And consider, my young friends, what opportunities you now enjoy of sowing the good seed. You are not like millions of poor heathen children throughout the world, who know not the true God or the

way of salvation ; who have no Bibles, and have never been told about God's love in sending His Son Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners ; who have been taught alone to worship idols of wood and stone—the workmanship of men's hands. Neither are you like multitudes of neglected children in our own land, who have neither parents nor friends who take an interest in their souls, and who are left to grow up in ignorance or disregard of religion. You have your bibles and kind parents or teachers who desire to instruct you and lead you in the way of life—who have told you how Jesus came from Heaven, and from the glory which he had with his Father—became a man of sorrows, and died upon the cross, to make atonement for sin and to bring perishing sinners to God and to Heaven ; and how he said “ suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not,” and hath graciously promised that they who seek Him early shall find Him. Oh think how sinful and ungrateful it will be, if while enjoying such privileges you neglect or abuse them ; how much worse it will be for you than for those who have not possessed them—remember that to whom much is given of them, of them also shall much be required, and that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gormorrah in the day of Judgment, than for us, if we reject the Gospel of God's grace,—if amid light we live in darkness, and amid the knowledge of better things, abide in sin. How foolish is it, my young friends, seeing we have this better light and these better things, not to improve and enjoy them ; for however the means of obtaining knowledge may at the commencement seem wearisome, knowledge in itself is truly pleasant, and when once a man comes to like an occupation, he never complains of the labour of it. You never hear of worldly people tiring while they are getting gold or seeking pleasure, though men toil and sacrifice and suffer more for these than for any thing else ; what labour will they not endure, what dangers will they not encounter, what degradation will they not submit to, if they may but get these

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things even though the possession of them brings many snares and many evils along with it. No less earnestly will they who have once experienced the satisfaction of religion, knowledge, and the pleasures of a religious life, count their labour well spent, and their sacrifices as nothing, so that they attain them. And this will more distinctly appear, if you think on the other hand of the consequences of sowing good seed, carelessly, or of not sowing it at all. It is a sad thing for a man to be without food in the harvest; to see his fields bare and his barns empty, when winter is coming on; and hungry children crying for bread. But it is a sadder thing still for parents and their children to be perishing for lack of the bread of life, to see death approaching and no provision made for eternity, after a life spent in neglect or contempt of God, and of the offers and invitations of His love, to see a judgment day at hand, when the rejected Saviour shall be seated on the great white throne to render to every one according to his deeds, "to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life, but unto them that are contentious and who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." The choice, therefore, my dear children, is placed before you; will you take Jesus now for your Saviour, your friend and your guide in the way to glory; or, will you take the world as your portion, and meet Jesus as your judge? Before you make your choice, think that the world can do very little for you; bright and attractive as its objects and its pleasures may appear to you now, in the sanguine season of youth, they are very deceiving; they bring many a sting, and many a sorrow along with them, as your parents and older friends will testify, and as you may see. They are, too, soon over; they pass away with life, and life cannot last very long, and may be very short. If it is long, sin will embitter it; if it is short, it will make it end in misery. And, Oh! eternity is long,

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it has no end, there will be no end of suffering and sorrow to them that die in sin, and out of Christ. But, on the other hand, while the children of God are open to all that is calculated to do them good, and to make them truly happy in life, whatever their outward circumstances may be, however destitute and afflicted, forsaken or reproached, they have a good conscience, and the peace of God in their souls; they know that they have Jesus for their friend, and that whatever things befall them, He will make them work together for their good. Even should they pass through much tribulation, they can rejoice in the confidence that, all their conflicts ended, they shall walk with Jesus, in white, the emblem of purity, and with palms in their hands, the symbols of peace, and with golden crowns on their heads, indicating that it hath been the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom, and having suffered with Christ, they shall also live and reign with Him. The harvest is the end of the world, my young friends. Christ sends forth the great reaper, Death, with his numerous attendants, storm and tempest, fire and flood, accident and disease, famine and sword, and he mows down the wheat and the tares alike, the former to be gathered into His barn, the latter to be burnt with fire unquenchable. Is it not wisdom, therefore, my dear children, that you should be working while it is called to-day—that you should begin without delay, if you have not already begun, with all your heart, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, the great and alone essential work of life, the making sure of your soul's salvation? Every other work may be dispensed with but this; the consequences of neglect in worldly matters may be more or less repaired, but not in this work; the consequences are eternal; delay must damage, neglect must ruin, your souls; the gaining of the whole world would not make up for the loss of your soul, nor will the loss of the world greatly trouble those who feel that their souls are safe, that they have secured the one thing needful, that Christ is theirs, and heaven is theirs.

Do not delay then, my young friends, delays are dangerous—"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near," lest the time come when, having denied Him, He shall deny you ; when He shall laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh ; when He shall say to those who will not hear when he calls them, nor turn from their sins, "depart from me ye accursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels."

If such shall be the dreadful fate of those that will not sow the good seed in the spring, do you not feel that you, young as you are, have a duty to do to others who are ignorant or careless about religion ; that, as God has been good and gracious to you, you should seek to do good to others ? If the good seed of the word has been sown in your hearts, you will feel pleasure in diffusing it abroad. God makes the grain to bear seed, that it may be scattered and bring forth more grain ; and so you do not receive your privileges for your own sake merely, but that you may dispense to others, and thus be instruments in glorifying your Redeemer, in winning souls to Himself ; and this you may do in being diligent in learning, that, by-and-by, you may assist in instructing others in the things that belong to their peace, in showing an example of good conduct in school and in church, and in the family, or wherever you are, by firmly resisting those who would tempt you to do wrong, and by kindly reproving and admonishing those who are doing so ; by trying to induce a careless companion to go with you to Sabbath-school, or to church ; by striving to save any money you can from needless indulgence, or from waste, that you may bestow it to relieve the poor or the needy, or to send the Gospel to the heathen. These are various ways by which you may alike show that the good seed has been sown in your own hearts, and help to sow it in the hearts of others ; and be assured, my friends, that there is far more true happiness in improving our powers and opportunities to the glory of Christ, and the good of

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others, than in all selfish gains or worldly pleasure. There is no peace to the wicked, to them that are without hope in God : " even in laughter," saith Solomon, " their heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness ;" but what, my friends, on the other hand, saith wisdom.— " My son, forget not My law ; but let thine heart keep My commandments," &c., &c. (Prov. iii., 1-18.)



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SERMON V.

"Lord, it is good for us to be here."—Matt. xvii., 4.

THESE words were spoken by Peter at the time of our Lord's transfiguration on the Mount, when he and his fellow disciples present saw His face shining as the sun, and his raiment white as the light, and when there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking to Him. Under the feeling of excitement and pleasure which he experienced he made the proposal—"If Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles—one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." In reference to this proposal, it is said by Mark—"For he wist not what to say, for they were sore afraid," and by Luke—"not knowing what he said." It is manifestly not in reference to the matter of our text, that the mixed reproof and apology for them, conveyed by these words, is applicable, for it undoubtedly was good for them to be there. Their selection by our Lord to be present with Him on this glorious occasion was a high and a precious privilege; it gave them a proof of the resurrection from the dead—a glimpse into the world of spirits—a view of saints of former ages in glory, and of the homage paid to Jesus by the chiefest saints, even in their present exalted condition, and of the interest which they took in the work in which He was engaged, the wondrous mystery of redeeming grace and love, through the decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. The transfiguration was a striking testimony to His divinity, and that the powers of the world to come were in fealty to Him; it was an event fraught with lessons of wisdom and encouragement; and it was good for them to be there, provided they made a good use of the opportunity.

But it was an inconsiderate, ill-judged proposal which Peter, in his over-hasty enthusiasm, made,—dishonouring

to his Master, and, though undesigned, involving blasphemy against Him. For though it was good for him and his fellow disciples to be there, to enjoy so high a privilege, it would not have been good for them to have been abidingly there, as was implied by the proposal to build tabernacles. Not only their Master, but they too, had a work yet to be accomplished. Had Jesus then entered into His glory, no atonement would have been made for sin, and no sinner saved. Had they abode there, the Gospel could not have been preached to all nations. The great purpose for which Jesus came into the world, and of their own calling and mission, would have been frustrated. Besides, the proposal was injurious to the honour of their Master, a blasphemy against His divine nature as the Son of God, in that it would have raised mere men, though saints in glory, to the same level with Him, in building tabernacles to their honour, and making them objects of worship, as if they were gods; while God only is to be worshipped, and Jesus alone, among the descendants of Adam, can claim such worship, inasmuch as while He became flesh and dwelt among us, He was, nevertheless, very God, the only begotten of the Father,—by whom and through whom and for whom all things were created, whether thrones or dominions, or principalities and powers, things in Heaven and things in earth; God over all, blessed for ever, whose Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and whose dominion is throughout all generations. But though Peter spake inconsiderately and confusedly, we can scarcely wonder, amid his mixed feelings of terror, of surprise, of admiration and delight, that he knew not what he said. The feelings raised by the marvellous vision which he was privileged to enjoy were too powerful, too exciting to be repressed. And though he weighed not the words which he spake, he knew, nevertheless, the feelings by which they were prompted. He could have told us why he spake, if not what he spake. These feelings we may easily divine. Let us contemplate for a

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moment the sublime, the amazing scene of glory that was revealed to Him upon the Holy Mount. Jesus and His three disciples were alone. They had accompanied Him, ignorant of what they were to be the favoured witnesses. Of a sudden, a change came over His whole appearance, of the most marvellous character; His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light, as if shining forth in all His glory, that His pre-eminence might be apparent in the remarkable interview which He was about to hold in their presence, and for the confirmation of their faith and hope, with saints of old, now inhabitants of glory. Moses, the man of God,—Elias, the prophet of the Lord, appeared unto them, talking with Him—not mere dumb shadows, but living spirits—the very same Moses who, by the power of the Lord, wrought signs in Egypt, and wonders in the field of Zoan; who, despite Pharaoh and his hosts, led the Lord's people forth, divided the waters of the Red Sea before them, and guided them through the wilderness; and who said, in reference to Jesus, the Messiah of God, "a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me Him shall ye hear;"—and the same Elias, the prophet of old, who restored the widow's son to life, and destroyed, by fire from heaven, the prophets of Baal, and brought rain in answer to his prayer, and prophesied against Ahab, and against Jezebel,—these appeared before them in living personality, just as much so as Jesus Himself; and they not only heard them talking together, but were cognizant of the subject of their conversation, an event which they, as yet, so little realized, but which was a subject of deepest interest and concern in the court of Heaven's high Majesty—the decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem; and while Peter yet spake in the fulness of his heart, and in the confusion of his astonishment and agitation, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice out of the cloud, which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him."

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Could any man fail to be transported beyond measure by such a scene? Was it wonderful that the excitable and enthusiastic Peter should be unable, amid the turbulence of his emotions, to think calmly? His fellow-disciples sank to the earth in mute fear, wonder and admiration. What a view was here afforded them of the communion of saints! There were saints on earth, and saints in glory, standing in each others' presence, hearing each others' voices, hanging on each others' words; and the subject of their discourse, the great transaction which was preparing on earth, for the redemption of a fallen, guilty world, an event which angels desired to look into; a theme of interest to the highest hosts of heaven, and the accomplishment and final perfecting of which shall be the song of praise alike to ransomed sinners, and to the angelic hosts throughout eternity. How delightful to think that the children of God here, and saints and angels above, have this common theme of communion, of thanksgiving, and of adoration. That which fills the thoughts, and engages the affections of the children of God on earth, similarly interests the inhabitants of heaven. And who, my friends, was the sharer, and, at the same time, the great theme of this wonderful conversation? Jesus Himself, in glory, such as His disciples had never before beheld him, stood, the centre of dignity and attraction,—Moses and Elias, in the brightness of heavenly radiance, with adoring reverence, paying homage to and addressing Him to whom the voice from the Father testified, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" and the theme, the decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, the result of His unmerited but infinite and never-dying love to sinners,—the subject to them of all-absorbing interest, and of inexpressible thankfulness. No wonder that Peter felt it to be good for him to be there; no wonder he so far forgot himself as to think it were blessedness enough to be for ever there; no wonder he forgot for the moment that this death, accom-

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panied with tears of bitterest agony, with humiliations, and persecutions, and horrid cruelties, was yet to be accomplished on Calvary, ere Jesus' work of mercy was completed, that a long and weary pilgrimage, with watchings and fastings, and toils and sufferings, and cruel deaths awaited themselves ere they should win the glory and wear the crown ; no wonder that he fancied that he was already in heaven with his Master glorified.

Peter's language—"It is good for us to be here," may afford us valuable subject for meditation and profitable lessons for our instruction and guidance. Surely, my brethren, where Jesus is, it is good for His people to be. They are safe there. He is the way, and they that follow Him shall not err. He is the truth, and He will lead His people unto all truth, for to know Him is eternal life. He is the light. They that walk in His light shall not stumble. In His light they shall see light. He is the fountain of grace. He is the consolation of Israel. He is the salvation of His people.

But when and where is He present with His people? In one sense we may say, when or where is He not present with them? As God, He is everywhere, and at all times present. He knoweth our uprising and our down-lying. He compasseth all our ways. There is not a thought of our minds, nor a desire of our hearts, nor an action of our lives, that is not perfectly known to him. The good and the evil are in this sense alike ever in His presence. As the Psalmist realized it to be with himself, so is it with every individual of our race: "Whither shall I go from Thy presence, or flee from Thy sight? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there ; if I make my bed in Hell, behold Thou art there ; If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me ; if I say surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me."

But there are promises made by Christ to His people, in His word, of being in a peculiar manner present

with them, under peculiar circumstances of duty, perplexity, temptation or affliction. Let us mark some of these ; and, first, in connection with secret prayer : "When thou prayest," said our Lord, "enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and He that seeth in secret shall reward thee openly ;" for "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry." "The Lord is nigh to them that call upon Him." "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you." The Lord never said to any of the house of Jacob, "seek ye my face in vain." Christ manifests Himself to His own otherwise than He doth unto the world. Often are they enabled to say, after their closet retirement, "Surely the Lord hath been in this place." They have felt the place whereon they have knelt to be holy ground, and have felt the blessed conviction which David experienced, "Verily, God hath heard me ; He hath attended to the voice of my prayer : blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me." The closet is indeed to them the inner sanctuary where they can speak alone and as face to face with God, and enjoy that freedom of communion with Him which is ever the consolation and the joy of His people. There they are with Jesus, their Mediator and Intercessor before the Throne, and they will feel "IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE." Oh, it is a precious privilege, my friends, which the people of God enjoy of being with Him in the closet. The world cannot know it, for they have not faith ; but His people do. Yet, alas ! how want of faith straitens even them, for they are not straitened in Christ. They receive not, because they ask not in faith. They do not unreservedly throw themselves upon God's promise. Or they receive not, because they ask in words, in profession, without real hearty desire of what they ask, or they ask amiss ; not that they may glorify God, but please themselves. These are the causes, my friends, of unanswered prayers, and of the hiding of the Father's

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face. It is because men so little prove God, that the windows of heaven are so little opened ; that the souls of the Lord's people are so dry and unfruitful, so little refreshed by the dews and showers of His grace. Those who have proved Him have never complained of having found Christ a broken cistern, or of having been sent empty away. How is it with you? Are your closets your refuge and your resort, not only in your necessities but for your chief joys? Is secret prayer and meditation not a task which you seek to get through, but a privilege which you delight in? Are your meditations of the Lord sweet? Is the remembrance of His mercies your song in the night ; and is your unceasing pleading for grace that you may alike glorify and enjoy Him? Do you manifest the Spirit of adoption in seeking Him with desire as your Father in Heaven ; and in connection with closet devotions, hath it been your realized experience that it was not only pleasant, but good, for you to be there?

But again, He is with His people in the sanctuary. There He hath promised to record His name, and to manifest His glory to His faithful worshippers—where two or three are met together in the name of Jesus, He is in the midst of them. The place appointed for God's worship, is called the house of God, because He is to be sought and found there, in an especial manner, just as we first enquire for a man at his own house. We may find him elsewhere, but we are most likely to find him there ; for God, wherever else He may be met with, is sure to be met with in His house, by the humble believing seeker. Yes, though He dwelleth not in temples made with hands, but is everywhere present, yet doth He condescend to meet with His people in the places where prayer is wont to be made ; and not with the high and mighty, the rich and the noble only, or because they are so, for "thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity ; whose name is Holy : I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is contrite and of a humble spirit ; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

In the experience of the privileges of God's house, David exclaims, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, oh Lord of Hosts ; my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord ; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth ;" and if this be our experience, my friends, we may surely say "it is good for us to be here ;" to meet with God—to seek instruction from His word ; to meditate on His work of grace ; to hold communion with Him in prayer ; to ponder the paths of our feet, and direct them in the way of His commandments ; to spread before Him our requests and our perplexities ; and the matter that is too hard for us to carry it to Jesus, that in going into the sanctuary of the Lord, we may be enabled, like Asaph, to understand the dealings of the Lord.

More especially is the Lord present with His people at His table. It is His own table ; His own blessed ordinance, commemorative of His death and His love in death. He is the master of the feast, and as of old, He made Himself known to His disciples in the breaking of bread, so doth He still, in that while the bread and the wine, the symbols of His broken body and shed blood, are dispensed, He witnesseth by His Spirit with their spirits, if they be children of God, in enabling them to feed by faith upon His flesh and His blood, and realize that these are meat indeed, and drink indeed. True believers have all more or less been enabled to say in meeting with the Lord in His ordinance, "it was good for us to be here ;" some have exclaimed with rapture, "we have seen the King in his beauty ;" others, "truly our communion and our fellowship was with the Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit, and it was precious ;" others, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste."

Yet again, my friends, He is with His people in their afflictions. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee and through the rivers, they shall not

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overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee, for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel thy Saviour." "The Lord is a present help in time of trouble." Yea, whatever the Lord sends in His providence, however trying and afflictive in itself, is good, if it be sanctified by His presence in it, "for all things shall work together for good to them that fear God, and who are the called according to his purpose." It is good for us, therefore, my friends, to be in affliction, if it brings us near to Christ, and makes us to enjoy his comfort-speaking presence. It is good for us to be in sickness—if Christ is in the sickness, so that the sickness of the body work the health of the soul. It is good for us to be in poverty—if poverty brings us to Jesus, to seek from Him the true riches. It is good for us to be amid dangers, if these keep us close to the refuge of the Gospel. It is good for us even to endure temptation, if Jesus appoints it and gives us the victory. It is good for us to be in weakness, if we are thereby led to seek our strength in the Lord. Every cross is good for us if it makes us look more to the cross of Christ. Have you, my friends, had this sweet consolation in your afflictions of being enabled to say "it was good for us to be here?" This has been the experience of many besides the Psalmist—"Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Whatever circumstances we are placed in, it is well for us to feel that they are keeping before us the great concern, and preparing us for the great work of life, forwarding in us the great interests of life, manning us for future contests, and encouraging us to future conquests, and enabling us to count all things but loss, so that we may win Christ and have Him as the portion of our souls. Then we shall have reason to say, whatever our outward circumstances, "it is good for us to be here," and just because of the assurance we enjoy that Jesus hath been there.

But Jesus will no less with his people in the hour of death. It is because Jesus is there that His people

can say—"Oh death where is thy sting? Oh grave where is thy victory?" "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." No help of man can avail then, heart and flesh faint and fail, but Christ will prove the strength of their hearts and their portion forever. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," said David, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." Thus is it good for us even to be there—if Christ be with us there,—if He have been formed in us the hope of glory; and if our life be hid in Christ with God, that when He appears, we also shall appear with Him, for without death there is no glory. And the highest privileges, the most glorious revelations of Christ to the soul,—the greatest peace and joy in believing,—the sweetest communion with Jesus on earth, would not satisfy were we to remain here in the wilderness—short of the promised rest of the city of habitation,—were we never to behold the King in His beauty.

It may be good for us to be here under various circumstances, but we may not set up our tabernacle here; this would not be good, for here is not our rest. It may be good and pleasant for us to be with Jesus on the mount of ordinances, but it were not good for us to rest satisfied with these, they are alone the means to something better; and yet the trouble-tossed, toilworn pilgrim, when Christ has been revealed to His soul as very precious, when he has had glimpses of His glory, through vistas into the abodes of bliss, opened up by faith, and, in the enjoyment of sweet communion, has been lifted, like Paul, into the third heavens, is apt, in the enjoyment of the present, not only to say, "it is good for us to be here," but "oh, that we might here fix our tabernacle, and take our rest; that we had no more to return to the turmoil, the strife, the cares, the sorrows, the temptations and the dangers of the world; we could be content to abide in present privileges, so that only we might have done with the warfare of life." But this, my friends, is to dis-

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trust God, to doubt or undervalue His promises. It is dishonouring to the Saviour, to rest satisfied with the mere view or enjoyment of Him by faith, and for fear of what we may be called upon to endure in the pursuit, to be content with any thing short of the full possession and enjoyment of Himself, and of the blood-bought privileges which He hath purchased for His people. Paul had learned to count all things but loss, that he might win Christ, and so will all Christ's people endure all things, and suffer all things, and sacrifice all things, that in being made partakers of His sufferings, they may be also partakers of His glory. It is in heaven alone, my friends, that we can say, it is good for us, abidingly, to be here,—here is our rest—but Jordan must be crossed, and although we may say it is good for us to be here, even here, seeing that the presence of Christ,—the ark of the covenant, has dried up the waters and prepared a way for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over, yet would we not halt there even to behold His glory thus revealed, while the shores of the land of promise—the land of rest, basking amid the sunless light of eternity, invite our entrance; for then shall His people “see face to face and know even as they are known.” They shall dwell in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; they shall have immediate communion with Him; they shall have pleasures for evermore.

But, while it is not good for us to wish to linger even amid the most precious worldly privileges, and while we must not be thus lured to avoid the path of duty, even though manifestly a path of difficulty, of temptation, of trials, of danger and of suffering; though we may not shun the race nor avoid the warfare, yet we must realize that it is good for us, wherever Christ is with us, to be there. We must glory in following him, and in taking up our cross that we may follow Him, in following Him through good report and through bad report, in life and in death, if we would be with Him abidingly hereafter. Neither shame, nor sorrow, nor sufferings must hinder our acknowledgement or profession of Jesus, if we would be acknowledged

by Him in the day when He shall come in the glory of His Father, with His Holy Angels.


But while Christ's people will rejoice in being where they may meet Jesus, they will be very fearful of being where He is not, in circumstances where they cannot expect to meet with Him, where they cannot be cheered by Him and enjoy His grace. Though they will not shun even temptations, snares, dangers in the path of duty, they will shun most anxiously placing themselves needlessly in the way of temptation. Their earnest, sincere, hearty prayer to God will be, "Lead us not into temptation." They will not only shun every evil, but every doubtful way. They will not linger where they cannot serve or enjoy Christ. Christ's people will, in so far as possible, be their companions and associates. They will seek their society among the godly; if thrown into unavoidable association with the worldly, while among them, they will not be of them. It will not be their calculation, how much they may enjoy the world without losing Christ, and endangering their souls. What they do for the world, they will do for the sake of Christ and of souls, that they may honour Him, bear their testimony to Him, and win souls to Him, that they may be saved. But their chief concern will ever be the care of their own souls, the making of their calling and election sure; and they will be very earnest, and very prayerful, and very watchful that they may keep their hearts with all diligence, knowing that out of them are the issues of life, and hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now, my friends, Christ cannot be where the stain of dishonest dealing, or grasping covetousness, or hoarding avarice, cleaves to the acquired or amassed gold, and dims its brightness. Neither is Christ, I say not at the feast of the glutton, or amid the revelry of the drunkard, but not even in the eating and drinking which are not made subservient to God's glory, and upon which His blessing is not sought. Neither is Christ where the vieings of luxury, the pomp and parade of the world, the praise of men are the chief objects of desire and pursuit, and where He has no place given to Him in

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the heart or thoughts. Ask yourselves, my friends, would you go to seek Christ at the theatre, or amid the gaiety and giddy whirl of the ball-room, or in the convivial meetings of the worldly, or in the gambling saloon, or in the bar-room? Can you even expect to find Him in the society of those, with whom there is nothing vicious or morally repugnant,—with whom there is intellect and refinement and outward morality and amiability, but who never name His name, who are strangers to His Word, and strangers to personal and family prayer, and who, if they assemble in His courts, do so as a form, and show no evidences of vital religion? And if Christ be not there, can any of you say it is good for you to be there? Where Christ is, my friends, there is safety; but where He is not there must be danger, even though it may not be immediately apparent. Persuade not yourselves, under any pretext, that it is good for you to be there. If Christ be not near, the Devil is; and who shall sustain you under his assault? You have no strength in yourselves; you are alone strong and alone safe in going forward under Christ's guidance and protection, and at His call. Ever walk, then, my friends, very closely with Jesus; seek that He be upon your right hand and upon your left, so that you may not be greatly moved. Let nothing come between you and Christ to hide your view of Him, and mar your peace and enjoyment; and let nothing separate you from Him, so that you be withdrawn from His protection; but follow the Lord fully, and persevere to the end, that so an abundant entrance may be ministered unto you at last, unto the Kingdom and glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; that you may be enabled to say, without reserve, "It is good for us to be here,"—"This is our rest." For, my friends, Christ is not to be found in Hell; there is no Saviour there, no deliverance from the second death. If you are not saved while here, you never shall be hereafter. There the worm dieth not, the fire is not quenched. Now is the day of grace. Death closes it. And after death is the judgment.

SERMON VI.

“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.—Rom. v., 1.

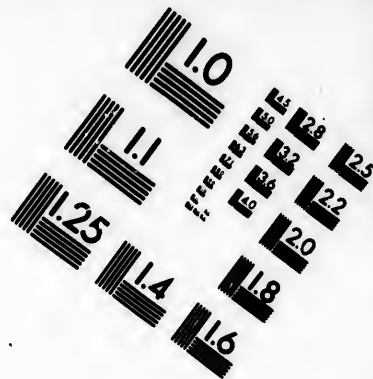
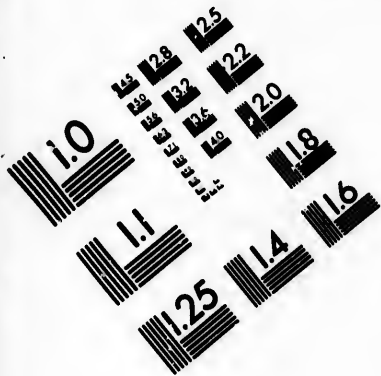
HE text implies that there is no peace with God to those who are not justified by faith. The Prophet Isaiah declares “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,”—the wicked here importing all who are unpardoned, unreconciled, transgressors of the law of God ; and, as by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified before God—for that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ; as there is none righteous, no, not one—the text, therefore, likewise implies that there is no peace with God to any man living, unless he be justified by faith. This is the legitimate—nay, the necessary conclusion to which the text brings us. Of what unutterable moment, therefore, my friends, to be aware of, and fully informed in regard to this truth—that we cannot have peace with God, unless we be justified by faith. Be it observed, that it is peace with God which is spoken of. There is a peace spoken of in the Bible, which is not peace with God,—the condition of those who say to themselves, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” Many ignorant of, or overlooking this distinction, will dispute the conclusion which we have deduced from our text ; and will maintain that peace may be found, and is found, from other sources, without justification by faith ; and, truly, as we have said, there is a peace of the world which may be drawn from other sources ; but that, we still assert, is not peace with God—this is a peace which the world cannot give, and which it cannot take away.

Let us consider for a little the peace which is obtained from other sources. If we were to overlook the distinction we have made, the declaration—“There is no peace to the

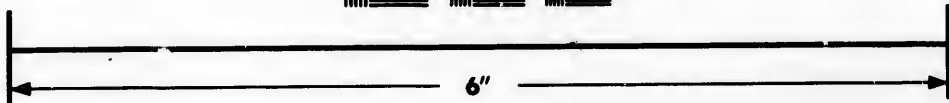
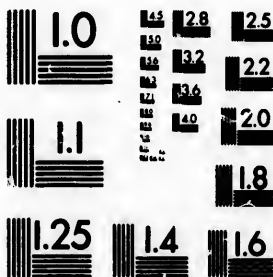
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wicked"—would not be true in fact; and it would also be opposed to other passages of Scripture. The Psalmist speaks of the wicked flourishing and spreading themselves like a green bay-tree; as exciting the marvel, yea, even the envy of the people of God; as having more than their hearts could wish, and as having no bands in their death; and our experience of the world shows that there are multitudes who have and who seek no peace with God, who are yet at peace within themselves, for a time at least; and some are even so blinded by, and confirmed in their delusions that they have no fears even in the dread hour of death. Multitudes of worldly and wicked persons there are, quite satisfied with their condition—rejoicing in their worldly prosperity; happy in their outward circumstances and feeling, as if they had really nothing left them to desire; occupied with the pursuit of worldly objects, and gratified with their worldly success and comforts; who, if they are subjected to trials and afflictions, submit to these as unavoidable evils, which they must bear if they cannot escape from them, or repair them; who look not beyond the world; who have neither hopes nor fears beyond it; whose minds never seem to have realized the idea of a future, or of preparation for it, or, if they have, whose notions of God are partial and vague; who have ill-defined ideas of a merciful Being, with whom all His creatures will be happy at last; who neither have just nor distinct views of God's holiness, or of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, or of a judgment to come, and the awful consequences of sin to the souls of the sinners; who are, therefore, wholly concerned about their present objects and enjoyments, and who are actuated in what they do neither by fears of God's wrath, nor by desires after His favour and love. When such are spoken of as sinners, on account of their worldliness and forgetfulness of God, and through this, as being in a state of wretchedness and misery, of imminent danger, of aggravated guilt, and of exposure to the wrath to come,—when spoken of as being enemies of God and of their souls,—they do not understand, they cannot





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take or apply to themselves the things which are said, because they have no inquietude. They are perfectly satisfied to be left as they are. They do not acknowledge any enmity to God in their hearts. They have no conscience of sin, no feeling that they are great sinners, that they have anything very terrible to fear from God, that He has been greatly offended by their conduct, or that His Holiness requires for its vindication any severe retribution against the offences of weak, frail creatures. Nay, they would even hope that they have something, if not absolutely meritorious, at least acceptable and pleasing to God, some good works to plead, or some negative holiness, which will disarm judgment and avert wrath, and procure for them future happiness—so that they set themselves at ease in giving themselves up to the world while they may, and hope when death shall come that they shall find support and a good hope for the next world, in their own works and in God's mercy. And how many a suffering, afflicted worldling looks upon his afflictions as an atonement for his sins, and trusts that death will bring relief to his sufferings, for no better reason than that they have embittered his life. Others, we believe, there are whose minds, whose hearts, whose consciences are so dead to everything beyond present carnal objects, interests or pleasures, and so seared even to sin by the habitual practice of wickedness, that, given over by the Lord to judicial blindness and insensibility, they are alike impervious to fear or to hope, whom the terrors of a judgment to come, and of everlasting burnings, alike fail to alarm, or the glory and the blessedness of heaven in the enjoyment of the love of Christ to allure.

But, my friends, be not deluded by the peace which any of these may seem to enjoy, to fancy that it is a true peace, or a lasting or secure peace. It is not the peace with God of which our text speaks. Do not think because such have no terrors of wrath and of judgment against their sins, that therefore they have no cause to fear; or, because they may have no bands in their death,

that, therefore, death will not bring upon them the awful consequences of their sin and estrangement from God (unacknowledged though these be), in the place of everlasting burnings.

What does the peace of the worldly, at best, amount to, but satisfaction with their present objects and pleasures, because they know no higher, no better contentment with the world ; because they think little or nothing of anything beyond the world ; and insensibility to danger, because they do not apprehend sin, and do not know God? In so far as their enjoyments are not merely carnal or worldly, their peace is but passive. It is the absence of fear, not hope ; insensibility to danger, not the appearance of safety. Death is to them a necessary evil, not a positive good ; or a refuge from the evils of life, rather than an entrance into blessedness. The peace of the worldly is an insecure, and it is a delusive peace. Every day experience shows it to be insecure. It may flourish as the green bay tree ; it may spread its boughs as the willows by the water-courses ; but it is as the flower, or as the grass of the field, which in the morning groweth up, and in the evening is cut down and withereth away. To-day a man is in the midst of wealth and comfort and enjoyment, an object of admiration or envy to all around him ; to-morrow, left destitute ; the comforts on which he rested, the luxuries in which he revelled, the pleasures which seemed to minister to every wish and fill every sense, denied him ; discontent and murmuring marring his domestic peace ; the very children and the partner of his bosom, the objects of his pride, become causes of his humiliation or his solicitude ; or disease and death invading and making breaches in the once gay and joyous, but now broken and afflicted family circle ; or his own health destroyed, his spirits sunk, his once prosperous house desolate ; his friends grown cold or fled, and himself not humbled, by his afflictions, to that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto life, which becomes the source of higher and purer and enduring joys, but left a prey to the overwhelming, hopeless sor-

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row of the world which worketh death. The peace of the worldly man must needs be as fickle, as unstable, as liable to disappointments, as certain soon to come to an end, as the things on which it rests are passing and perishable, and the sources from which it is drawn subject to change. No more can the worldly man erect for himself a stable fabric of peace, than a builder can raise a solid and lasting superstructure upon a foundation that is being gradually undermined, and which must soon be carried away. Such is the peace of those, who build it upon the objects of the world; but it is not peace with God.

But, again, the peace of the world is delusive on whatever grounds it may be built. If built upon the objects of the world, it must soon fail them, and prove its delusiveness, since all these things must have an end; and it is often found to be hollow and delusive in itself, if once conscience be awakened; if once the guilt and the terrors of sin be brought home to the apprehension, and God be seen alone as a holy and a sin-avenging God. Oh, my friends, the peace of the worldling is broken and dispersed, as the frail planks of a summer day's bark before the tempest. Wealth cannot give peace then; power and friends cannot give peace then; health and comforts and family cannot give peace then; pleasures cannot shut out this destroyer of peace. It is like the sword suspended by a hair, or like the writing on the wall at the banquet of Belshazzar; there can be no peace there, for there is, there can be, no peace out of God, or under the sense of unatoned, unpardoned sin, for an immortal soul. But there are many who have been brought to feel this, who yet have not been brought to know the way of peace with God, who have built their peace upon other foundations than that which the Lord hath laid, and who have thus deceived themselves, and many who have continued in their delusion to the end—who have lived in it and died under it. Such hath been the peace of all those who have sought and trusted in idols of their own conceiving,

and not in the God of the Bible, and sought other ways of peace, than that which He hath Himself made known.

Many to whom we have already referred, with inadequate views both of sin and of God's character, have built their peace upon the mercy of God, without reference to His holiness, truth and faithfulness. But, my friends, it will not stand the sinner when awakened to the terrors of the law and a judgment to come; and multitudes have been brought to feel this, and to tremble, though they could not repent.

There are others who have built the foundations of their peace upon works of righteousness of their own, who have thus sought to justify themselves before God, and to make out a claim to salvation. This is a numerous class of professing Christians. Nay, the principle of self-justification is so inwrought into the heart of man by nature, than even the most advanced Christians, can with difficulty, through watching and prayer, by Divine grace, repress its influence. Even in the case of those who do not rest their peace wholly upon it, how often is it so mingled up with the only true source of dependence, so rested upon along with, or rather than that, as to mar, or to destroy the peace which can alone be found in justification by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? There is nothing more certain, more demonstrable, than the declaration that no man can be just with God by any works of his own. What doth the law of God, as contained in the Scriptures, say?—"The soul that sinneth it shall die,"—"The wages of sin is death,"—not the death of the body, but the death of the soul. And who will dare to say that the law of nature does not declare the same truth? Who will say that the Creator and Ruler of all is not a holy God; that His law must not be a holy law; that He behoves not alike to require and to exact sinless obedience; that He can either countenance or tolerate anything else; that He could proclaim a law which would permit even the least degree of sin, or that He could fail to require to the full extent every iota of that law

which He hath proclaimed? And who can affirm himself to be without offence before God? As Job of old saith—“if I justify myself mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it also shall prove me perverse.” Who can lay his hand upon his heart and say—I have not sinned?

If these things be true, who can escape the sentence of the law? It is already pronounced against every sinner, the violated holiness of God's will must be vindicated, His truth must be maintained, the soul that sinneth it shall die. Another debt, afterwards paid, cannot wipe away a debt formerly incurred. Obedience in all other respects cannot atone for disobedience even in one case. He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all. That a man is not a murderer will not prevent the full penalty of death being executed against him for robbery or housebreaking, if such be the penalty prescribed by the law; because a man has committed the crime of murder once, he incurs the penalty; he could incur no more were he convicted of fifty offences. So man, by one transgression, incurs the penalty of death—so grievous is the sin against God—equally as by multiplied offences. All are upon the same level in this respect, the greatest and the least of sinners. Neither can man offer any atonement to God for his sins, for his whole, his unreserved obedience is due to God. Repentance, even could it be perfect, were no atonement for past sin, any more than future holiness, were that possible. As all that a man has is derived from God, and given only to be used in His service, so he has nothing wherewith to propitiate God, or to purchase pardon and indemnity for his offences. All his works, all his penances, all his observances, all his forms of worship, have no power to justify before God, and, therefore, no power to give the soul peace with God. Many have trusted to these things, many have found peace in them for a time, but not peace with God, only peace in themselves and with idols of their own fancying—not peace with the only true God. Some few may have found peace

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in these things to the end, but only the delusive peace of which we have been speaking, not peace with God. It is true that it may possibly bear the characters, and, so long as the delusion lasts, may produce the apparent effects of a true peace, give peace of conscience, though the conscience be seared or blinded, and peace in the hour of death, though only by the future consequences being veiled. But what avail, my friends, to live in a delusive dream of peace even to the very hour of dissolution, if it be only to awake to the delusion when recovery is past, if it be only to have the eyes opened to the dread realities which must meet the soul after death,—a God unreconciled, a judgment unprepared for, and a portion of unutterable misery which cannot be avoided or alleviated? The sleep-walker may dream of safety and of joy till he falls over the precipice, and is plunged into the abyss of waters below, never to rise again. So may the deluded sinner cry, peace, peace, when he is on the brink of ruin, and only awake to the sense of his condition, when struggling amid the fiery billows, and the then unavoidable pains and torments of the place of woe.

My friends see that ye do not allow yourselves to come or remain under such delusions. Rest assured that there is no true, secure peace for any human being, for all are sinners, save in pardon and acceptance with God; that the peace of the worldly on whatever it may be founded, is uncertain, unsatisfying and delusory, even during life, and must certainly prove utterly delusive at death. An unpardoned sinner can have no peace with God while his conscience is unawakened or his eyes blinded to the truth; he may be indifferent or secure in his ignorance of and insensibility to danger, but as soon as his eyes are opened to discern his real state and condition in relation to God and eternity, he must be miserable until the Lord shall speak peace to his guilty soul, and take away his fears and fill him with the confidence of love. And there is one only revealed way, my friends, of attaining this peace with God, and that is justification by

faith in the atoning blood and merits of the Lamb of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world, and suffered and died in the nature and in the stead of His people, upon the cross, that being delivered for their offences, and bruised for their iniquities, the chastisement of their peace might be laid upon him, and by His stripes they might be healed; that the guilt of their sins being transferred to Him as their surety, the condemnation of the law might be taken away from the soul of every believer, and he might appear before God justified, and pardoned through the precious atoning blood, and clothed in the perfect righteousness of the Redeemer. There is no other justification, no other righteousness which is or can be effectual for man's salvation, and consequently for man's peace with God; for man, by nature, is utterly destitute, utterly helpless; he can do nothing of himself; neither is there any other way of justification which is consistent with the honour of God, by which He is at the same time just and the justifier of the ungodly, by which the sentence of the law is fulfilled, and the sinner pardoned. Had salvation been in any measure of works, effectual pardon could not have been granted to sinful man till after death, for though pardoned to-day, he must have sinned to-morrow, and required renewed pardon to the last, and under such circumstances, there could be no peace with God out of Heaven; but pardon is of grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Once justified by faith in His atoning blood, there is no condemnation; the iniquities of believers are blotted out forever. Washed in the blood of the Lamb, they shall never know the death of the soul, for He tasted death for every one of them; He gave His soul an offering for sin, and He knoweth His own—those whom the Father hath given Him, and He will keep them and bring them to His kingdom. Not one of them shall be lost. Oh what a secure, what a precious, what a peace-giving hope! Believers are chosen of God in Christ; they are alike called

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justified, sanctified, and glorified by Him, who alone is equally the author and the finisher of their faith ; they are not their own workmanship, but God's ; they are not in their own keeping, but in Christ's ; nothing shall pluck them out of His hand ; they are become the sons and the daughters of God, and if children, then heirs, joint heirs with Christ, of his inalienable portion in the Kingdom, which the Father hath given Him. "Believe and thou shalt be saved," is the promise of God's word, and whenever the believer hath truly laid hold of Christ by faith, and when he has obtained satisfactory ground for believing that he has a saving interest in Christ by the commencement and progress of the work of grace in his soul, then he has peace with God. There is nothing more that can permanently disturb it. It is the sense of sin in the awakened sinner that ruins his peace ; he trembles before God revealed to him as a holy sin-avenging God, and at the thought of wrath to come ; but when humbled in utter helplessness and destitution, he has fled to Christ and found refuge and safety in Him ; when he has been brought to realize that Jesus died for sinners such as he ; that He is declared to be the Son of God with power, by His resurrection from the dead, and is able to save to the uttermost even the chief of sinners who will come unto God through Him, and that He will cast out none who do so ; then the believer can look to God as a reconciled God, and can cry unto Him, Abba Father. He can believe that with the gift of His Son, His best, His unspeakable gift, He will freely give Him all things ; that nothing shall be able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord ; that all things are his ; that every needful gift and every needful grace is his ; that life and death are his ; the promise of the life that now is, and of the life that is to come ; for Christ is his—the fountain and source of grace and of salvation—in whom all fulness dwells, and out of whose fulness he may freely draw, and he experiences the promise of the Lord—"peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto

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you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you ;" "let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." He can say "my beloved is mine and I am His"; he can go up into the wilderness to meet and encounter, and overcome trials and hardships, and endure afflictions, leaning upon Christ, and nothing shall make him afraid, for he knows that his enemies shall not prevail against him ; and that he shall be more than a conqueror through Christ who loved him. Nothing therefore shall move him. His peace is not like that of the worldly and carnal, dependent upon uncertain objects, but is built upon Christ. The world must fail, and every other dependence must fail those who trust in them sooner or later ; but Christ cannot fail the believer. He becomes a more secure possession the more He is relied on ; the more fully the believer appropriates him, the more is he experienced to be all his salvation, and all his desire ; the more are all things counted but loss, so that he may win Christ, and so that he may honour Christ ; he will shrink from nothing to which duty calls him ; he will seek to let love and gratitude have their full sway in urging him on to ever increased devotedness in the Lord's work. He will never think that he can do enough for Christ ; and the devotedness of his own love will not be the measure, but the assurance of the love of Christ towards him, through the witness of the Son of God with his Spirit that he is at peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Trials and afflictions, my friends, will not infringe upon this peace ; it will show its power in supporting under them, or even in turning them into causes of rejoicing ; in that they shall be overruled by God, to work out a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory, for the believer can glory in the cross of Christ by which the world is crucified to Him and he to the world. Yes, my friends, the peace of the righteous is as the stream of a mighty river ; the petty obstacles which ruffle its surface, only shew its depths and its power ; it flows over all and bears all irresistibly along with it, and spreads itself out wider and

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wider, like an ocean, reflecting on its unruffled bosom, the face of Heaven.

My friends, is this the representation of your state? Have your sins and the terrors of your awakened souls brought you to repentance and brought you to Christ? Have you come to the conviction that there is salvation in none other; but that there is full, free salvation in Him for all who believe in Him, and do you believe that you have found pardon and peace with God through Him; that without Christ you must have been miserable; that with Him you have all you need and all you can desire; and that your most ardent wish is for increase of faith to receive Him more heartily, and to appropriate Him and to rely upon Him more unreservedly and exclusively, that you may know the truth of the promise, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon Thee, because he trusteth in Thee?"

Oh, my friends, do not yield to Him a divided faith, otherwise you must have but a broken and disturbed peace; do not mar your confidence and your peace by resting upon aught else for your safety than on Him—in so far, you mingle an element of weakness and of disquietude. Christ will not acknowledge a divided homage. They, who are truly His, will be ever labouring and striving to bring all into subordination to Him, to exalt Him as the supreme object of their affections; and will take this, as we have said, not as the measure, but the indication of His love to their souls. For if we love God, we know that He first loved us; that our love to Him is but the fruit of His love to us, and that no man hath ever come to the Father through Jesus, without the Father having drawn him. The peace of the believer consists in being emptied of himself and being filled with Christ. He beholds nothing but sin and insufficiency in himself, but all excellency and all desirableness in Jesus; in his own righteousnesses, nothing but filthy, polluted rags; in the righteousness of Christ the only unspotted garment in which he may stand before God; in himself alone the

leprosy of sin, the seeds of death, the tokens of ruin, and the grounds of despair, but in Jesus the fountain of cleansing, the healing balm, the life of his soul, the source of strength, his peace with God, his hope of glory, and his portion of everlasting blessedness. But do not suppose that the course of the believer is without trials and afflictions and anxieties, either outward or spiritual. This were contrary to the word of God, and contrary to the universal experience of Christians. It is through the wilderness that they have to pass, through much tribulation, and through many enemies, must they enter into the promised rest, and undergo many hardships, many backsets, and many anxieties by the way ; but then all these things are intended and appointed to exercise and perfect the faith and other graces of the Lord's people, and as their faith is strengthened, their peace and joy in believing will abound more and more. As perplexities and anxieties, and sorrows assail them, they will cleave the more closely to Jesus, and feel Him to be all the more precious for guidance, for support, and for consolation. As the night darkens and the clouds gather, the star of hope will fix their gaze the more steadfastly, and shine through, all the brighter and the more cheering for the contrast, and as the tempest rises, and the billows rage and roar, the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth in within the vail, will be held the faster, and valued the more. So will the believer cleave to Jesus the more tenaciously the more dangers and doubts assail him, and the more other hopes prove futile and fallacious. He will feel his rejoicing in the Lord to be all the greater, seeing that the power of a justifying faith wrought in him by the Spirit, is illustrated and manifested the more clearly in producing in him, amid the most apparently unfavorable circumstances, that peace of God which passeth understanding, which the world cannot give, and which it cannot take away.

My friends, if you have not peace with God, you are the enemies of God, the children of wrath, even

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as others. Oh, will ye remain the enemies of God? Will ye, amid all the calls, the light, the privileges of the Gospel, yet harden your hearts against the grace and love of God, and reject his great salvation? Will ye thus treasure up for yourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God? Will ye not make your peace with God? Believe now, that ye may be saved, and that ye may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that your hope in Christ may lift you above all the disquieting and disturbing circumstances of life, and sustain you under all its trials and afflictions, and evils, by carrying you even forward to, and fixing your hope and your affections upon the high and blessed rewards of your Christian calling, when—your race run and the prize attained, your fight fought and the victory and the crown secured—all your comparatively light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall be found to have wrought out for you a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory.



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SERMON VII.

But they made light of it.—Matt. xxii., 5.

THE words of our text form a portion of the parable of the marriage supper of the King's son. This parable was spoken to illustrate the unwillingness of men to receive the Gospel, to acknowledge the grace of God in it, and to honor His Son by their ready joyful acceptance of it. Alas, it is a melancholy fact that multitudes—far more, we fear, than will be readily allowed—make light of the Gospel, find various excuses for refusing compliance with its invitations, and turning a deaf ear alike to its entreaties and its warnings. Let us meditate a little upon this subject, for our instruction; and may the Lord bring home what is consistent with His own truth to our hearts for our warning or encouragement. Though it is the ingratitude and folly of the invited guests, in despising the grace offered by their King, that is prominently set forth in the parable, yet the salvation of the Gospel does not consist alone in the privileges which it holds forth to the people of God, high and glorious as these are. It consists in deliverance from a condemnation incurred, as well in a participation of a glory undeserved,—a salvation from Hell as well as an inheritance in Heaven. And if the guilt of those, who rejected the King's grace in offering blessings freely to the invited guests, is represented as having been great, and deservedly calling down upon them the displeasure and vengeance of the King, and if men are thus exposed to the destroying wrath of God for rejecting mercies and privileges, is not all this guilt and folly and ingratitude greatly aggravated by the thought that these mercies and privileges are offered to them as sinners, and that they are superadded, as it were, to the offers of deliverance from deserved wrath, and the revealed

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consequence of it in eternal death to the soul? Now, my friends, is this truly a representation of man's condition by nature, and through sin? Is it really the case that the Gospel proclaims deliverance and salvation, as offered by God to all—even to the chief of sinners, who shall repent and believe the Gospel? You profess, my friends, to believe this; if your assuming the name, attending upon the services and ordinances of the Gospel, and claiming the standing and privileges of Christian, mean anything at all, they mean that you believe this; that you admit yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God—lying under the sentence of God's law as transgressors, which declares that "the soul that sinneth it shall die;" that you are unable of yourselves to atone for your sins and satisfy the law; that you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, sent from Heaven, in the nature of man, to atone, by His death upon the cross, for the sins of His people, even as many as shall believe in His name; that you rest upon His atonement as your hope of justification, and upon His righteousness, imputed to you through faith as your hope of acceptance—upon your being adopted in Him as children of God, as your title to the inheritance of His kingdom, and upon the sufficiency of grace which is provided and treasured up in Him as your only source of strength and sufficiency to do the will of God, and as the only means of your sanctification and preparation for glory. But, are there not many who do not think of what their profession implies or involves? Are there not multitudes of nominal Christians who, while they, in words, acknowledge themselves to be sinners, do not at all realize what is comprehended in this confession, the awful and eternal consequences of unatoned sin; and who, while they speak of salvation through Christ, have no adequate conception either of what it is from which believers are delivered, or what are really the privileges of the great salvation to which they profess to look; and have no adequate views either of everlasting death, or of everlasting life,—either of the hell from which

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they hope to be saved, or of the Heaven which they hope to attain? Oh, how many professors are there who, to judge by their conduct, have neither any disquieting fears of God's wrath, nor any earnest desires of His favor and love; who do not show the actuating power upon their lives and conversation which just apprehensions of these things would produce; for were they truly realized, surely the awakened soul could neither be at ease in disregarding the warnings of danger, nor in slighting the offers of grace? But, if the Gospel speaks truly in regard to these things, it is a fearful matter to make light of them. Whatever doubts men may entertain of the truth of the Scripture declarations upon these subjects, if they would only allow their minds fairly and fully to take them in, one would think they would be cautious of utterly disregarding them, of incurring even the most distant risk of such awful consequences. And can we attribute it to any other cause, my friends, than a real, though unacknowledged, disbelief, not only want of faith in the full extent of the declarations of the Bible, but an actual belief of the contrary, that men make light of the Gospel warnings and invitations as they do? For, surely, that man must be a daring man, who, if he has any doubts, will, for the sake of the passing, perishable, unsatisfactory objects and pleasures of the world, run even the remotest risk of incurring, irreparably, the evils and miseries revealed, or of sacrificing offers which are declared as affording the only hope of everlasting happiness to the souls of men. Yet whatever the cause, my friends, whether unbelief of the Scriptures, as being indeed the infallible and irreversible will of God, or want of a full apprehension of the things which they reveal, the fact appears with melancholy clearness, that there are multitudes, not only of those who deny a God, or deny the Scriptures as the rule of God's will, but of those who make a profession of Christianity, who yet regard very lightly and inadequately their danger through sin, and their obligations and responsibilities, through grace, and who thus make light of Christ himself; and we

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fear there are multitudes, who are hardly aware that they are doing so, who are so engrossed with the world, whether in its cares or its pleasures, that they are utterly blinded to and unconcerned about their spiritual condition and future prospects; or who are so averse to behold these in their true light, that they turn from the unpleasant subject and seek to put away the thought of it, by giving themselves up to the pressure of present business, or the seeking of present pleasure, or to anything that will stifle uneasy fears, free them from disagreeable restraint, relieve them from unwelcome duties or distasteful responsibilities. But, my friends, is this reasonable—can this be safe—to regard anything lightly which is made known in a professed and highly accredited revelation from God, and which concerns the condition of our souls, and our prospects for eternity, seeing especially that there are only two conditions therein made known—a state of reconciliation and acceptance with God, and eternal glory, or the continuance throughout eternity of that state of condemnation and enmity to God, in which all men are declared to be sunk by nature and through transgression, and the awful consequences of it in the enduring of the portion of everlasting burnings prepared for the Devil and his angels, and which must be the portion of all those who remain unreconciled to God, who brave the warnings of a judgment to come, and of wrath revealed, and who despise and disbelieve the offers of mercy and of grace? And, are not all those really doing this, who are making light of the Gospel; who are treating, with indifference, either its solemn warnings, or its earnest entreaties and invitations to repent and turn unto the Lord, allowing other things, whatever they may be, to divert their thoughts from them, or to prevent their seeking of them as what is of first and most prominent concern? Is not the doing otherwise just practical unbelief? Oh, my friends, we would earnestly warn you against it; not to think of the dangers against which the Bible seeks to guard you, as mere shadows, as mere bug-bears to terrify

you into obedience, but as the true, real, unexaggerated consequences of unrepented, unatoned sin; and not to think that anything short of a living faith in Christ, in the deliverance which He has wrought out for His people, and the salvation which He has purchased for them,—anything but a personal and individual interest in this salvation will avail you—a faith which will make these views operative, through the constraining power of love, to the entire and unreserved devoting of yourselves to Him, who hath redeemed you, and to the honoring of Him, in seeking the full enjoyment of the privileges, and the full manifestation of the character of His people? Thus alone can you enjoy the benefits of His redemption; thus alone can you escape the condemnation of making light of Christ, and of the offers of His Grace. The work and service of the Christian, is no half-and-half matter. It may not be taken up after the world and the flesh have been satisfied. It is an earnest work, a hearty work, a continual, uninterrupted work, a work which must include and absorb every other work, because the Christian indeed, who feels the full weight of his obligations and responsibilities to Christ, through a just apprehension of the deliverance wrought out for him, and the privileges of his high calling, will feel that he can regard nothing lightly, which in any way, even in the slightest degree, affects the Redeemer's glory, and his own interest in His salvation. To guard you, my friends, against such sin and danger of deceiving yourselves in a matter so vital, we shall endeavour to set before you some of those ways in which those who are professing believers may, nevertheless, be making light of the things of Christ, and, therefore, of Christ Himself.

First,—they do so, with whom the searching of the Scriptures is not a frequent, regular, earnest matter—for Jesus himself said, "These are they which testify of me." Do they contain the Gospel of the grace of God? Are they able to make wise unto salvation? Are they the very word by which men shall be judged in the last day? And

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is it not making light of God's message and light of Christ if you do not read, nay, search them frequently and carefully? If while you peruse over and over again important documents relating to your worldly concerns and interests, and bestow such unwearied pains and labor, and seek the guidance and assistance of skilful advisers, lest you should lie under any misapprehension in regard to their meaning, and thus suffer worldly loss, or fail of enjoying to the full worldly rights or advantages, is it not the greatest sin and folly, if you only occasionally and partially peruse the title deeds on which your professed interest in the heavenly inheritance rests, and are satisfied to take much on trust, and to remain ignorant of much that is in them, and are thus careless about making your calling and your election sure?

If your profession to regard the Bible as the Word of God be true, you cannot be thus indifferent about reading it. If you truly feel the privilege of having in your hands a revelation of God's will for your instruction and salvation, you will not let it remain as a useless book upon your shelves; you will not think it enough that you have a copy of it in your houses; you will read it and study it on every possible opportunity. The idle excuse of want of time will never pass your lips. They who feel the importance of doing anything will make time for it. It is precisely because men make light of Christ's Gospel that they do not find time, frequent time and opportunity to read and study it. Men find time enough for their business, and for their pleasures, and for their sins. Were they as much concerned about their eternal interest and about their soul's safety, and about the privileges of their Christian calling, and about spiritual enjoyments, they would find ample time for reading and ample opportunity for meditating upon and pondering the Word of God too. All will have time to die and time to stand before God in judgment. Will ye not take time during the day of grace to prepare for death, and to prepare for standing before the great white throne? If ye

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do not redeem from the world time for this, you will have time enough through eternity to curse your folly and your unbelief, amid the everlasting burnings of the place of woe.

Oh, my brethren, let none of you continue thus to make light of Christ. Think how the word which you thus make light of has been prized by many a poor heathen, awakened to a concern for his soul, who has given up his all to possess it, and has suffered all rather than part with it. Think how, in times of persecution for the faith, men who had learned to know that Christ is precious, endured not only the spoiling of their goods—the excruciating of their bodies, and death itself amid the flames of the stake, amid the reproach and torments of the gibbet, or under the slow agony of instruments of torture, rather than surrender the free use of their Bibles and the unrestricted exercise of their faith. See that you, my friends, while we hope you may never be called upon thus to testify to the value in which you hold your Bibles, yet regard them as no less precious, and honor the Redeemer in whom you profess to trust, by honoring the record of His great salvation.

But, again, professors of the Gospel may make light of the Gospel, by making light of the means of grace commanded by God in His Word. Those, who do not practise prayer, make light of Christ, for He alike gave the command and the example of continual prayer to the Father; and His apostles exhorted praying without ceasing. In everything, through prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God. They blaspheme God who do not pray. They make Christ a liar. They say either that they do not need, or that God cannot, or will not hear or answer. It is a making light of God's promise or of God's grace, if men do not pray alike in the closet, in the family, and in the sanctuary; if they do not make their hearts temples for the Lord's worship; if they do not make their houses Bethels in which the Lord will delight to dwell, and if they do not seek and

appropriate the privilege of meeting with God in every place where he hath promised to record His name.

It is making light of Christ to make light of the preaching of the Word and the ordinances of the Lord's house ; to make light of them by infrequency or irregularity of attendance ; by carelessness in hearing the word ; by suffering worldly thoughts to intrude upon the services of the sanctuary, or listlessness and drowsiness to creep over you and rob you of the benefit, or, by what is the great cause of all these evils, not seeking in prayer and meditation the previous preparation of the heart for the sacred duties of the Lord's house. It is a solemn thing to come into the Lord's presence for His worship ; for it is an awful thing to fail of duly honoring him in it, to draw near to Him with the lips, and to profess to honor Him with the mouth, while the heart is far from Him—thus making a mockery of Him who knoweth what is in man, and who will render to every man not according to his profession, but according to the truth. If you undervalue the preaching of the word, you undervalue an ordinance of God. Can He bless those who do so—who choose out ways of their own, and will not follow His ? Do you not thus make yourselves wiser than God, and disbelieve the truth of His promise, or the efficacy of His grace ? Or if you come carelessly or prayerlessly to His house or ordinances, do you not just make light of what He promises there to bestow upon His faithful worshippers ?

Surely, if there were there more earnest desires after the things of Christ, and more faith in Him, there would be more diligent waiting upon Him for direction, and a blessing in seeking them. And they who come to the sanctuary from the preparations of the closet, will be those who will be the most surely and the most truly refreshed by its privileges. They who despise the commanded means of grace cannot expect the promised blessing. Alas, we fear there are multitudes of professing Christians who come to the house of God and attend upon the ordin-

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ances of God merely out of custom—or to pass an hour, or to see and be seen; or to hear the preacher and not to hear what God the Lord has to say to them about their souls; and many of those who hear and listen, who come to have their intellect exercised, or their taste gratified, or their sensibility excited; who will discuss the doctrine or criticise the preacher and the discourse, but who seek not to know or to apply the truth of God for their instruction or sanctification. But, by so doing, you fearfully make light of Christ, whose ambassadors are, in accordance with His command, declaring to you the grace of God for your salvation; preaching that word, which, if it be not to you a savor of life unto life, by your embracing it, shall most assuredly prove to you a savor of death unto death, by your making light of it. Has the preaching of the Word, and have the ordinances of God's worship been blessed to you, my friends, for your instruction and edification in the faith and hope of the Gospel, and to your peace and joy in believing? If so, it is well. Give God the glory and seek more of the privilege; but, if not, seek the cause in yourselves. There must be the source and spring of your not profiting. The power, promise and faithfulness of God cannot fail. You must have been making light of the means of grace in some way. There is no respect of persons with God. If you use the means in faith, you have the promise. Search yourselves; see where the failure lies, and come to God, as He commands you, and you shall not fail of the blessing, if it be indeed the blessing that you truly seek. But, my friends, you must seek this; you must seek what the Lord offers and what alone He will bestow; for if you do not, in this respect also you make light of Christ. Many would desire to be saved, could they be saved in their own way, and have a salvation of their own choosing. Many would seek salvation, could they be saved by certain outward actions, without restraining their lusts, or curtailing their carnal freedom. Many would be saved, might they be saved in their sins, rather than from their sins. All would

desire to go to Heaven, might they be allowed to enjoy the world without restraint, while in it. But, the carnal heart is averse to give up sin for holiness, to give up the flesh and the world for the enjoyments of God, and of His presence. Men will hardly be saved from Hell, because they must be saved from sin too. It is this carnal nature that leads so many to make light of the offers of salvation through Christ. We must be driven, by the terrors of the law, to the refuge of Christ, in order to know the extent and the value of His grace and love. The law must be our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, and we must have views of the danger and hatefulness of sin, before we shall love and desire the holiness of the Gospel. How much of this lingering, hankering after sin is still shown by professors of the Gospel? How many things are there, for which, if they do not actually place them before the salvation of Christ, they will yet risk their salvation, or mar their privileges, by allowing them to come in the way of duty, or to hinder the means of grace? A call of duty, or the improvement of a means or opportunity of grace is opposed by some call of the world. One must go to his farm; another to his merchandise. They reason with themselves—it is an urgent business, a pressing call, or it will only be for this once. Some such excuse points out the tendency of the natural inclination; and while there is no faith exercised, that God will make up to them what of the world His people surrender in His cause, there is apt to be a ready faith in what, however, is not promised, that God will excuse and pardon their negligence in the use of the means of grace, and make up to them that of which they deprive themselves, for the sake of securing, as the suppose, worldly objects. Is not this a grievous making light of Christ, that we will not trust Him even for our worldly portion, and will trust to ourselves more than to Him for our eternal portion? Oh, my friends, beware of preferring anything before Christ, or even of bringing anything else into competition with Him in your affections. He will not

bear a divided service. A man wavering in his allegiance shall not receive anything of the Lord. We must aim and strive after an entire surrender of ourselves to Christ, and the subjecting of everything to His service and for His glory.

We observe farther that they make light of Christ, who do not take diligent heed that their profession be genuine and from the heart; and that it bear suitable fruits. Thus His people will seek to honor Him; not by an outward form, an empty name, a mere profession, but by exhibiting the power of the truth, the constraining influence of His love to them over their hearts, an unreserved service of Him, not in those things alone which our hearts will give up without a struggle, which we can yield without any crucifying of our carnal affections, but in whatever may not only appear to be opposed to the honor of the Redeemer, but even in whatever may seem not to be conducing to His glory, that we may prove ourselves not only not to be against Christ, but actively and zealously devoted to His service and glory, striving, not grudgingly but heartily, after the greatest attainable amount of honor and obedience which we can render to Him, for in so far as we are not doing this we are making light of Christ and of His great salvation.

We entreat you to examine yourselves in regard to these things; see that ye be not making light of Christ in any of these respects. Think who He is, for what purpose He was manifested in the flesh, and for what end He is now again raised to the glory of His Father. Let us not regard those things lightly, which God hath regarded of such infinite moment. Oh let us not view sin lightly, seeing that God hates it so irreconcilably—nor regard holiness as an indifferent thing, since God makes it essential to the enjoyment of the blessedness of His presence. Let us beware of making light of the work of Christ, for pardon and for grace, seeing that God hath made it the only ground of acceptance,—the only source of sufficiency; for who shall dispute with

God ; who shall give acceptance to that which He hath not accepted ; who shall give efficiency to that which he hath not invested with efficiency ? And let us be assured that, if we make light of the things of Christ, He will make light of us in the great day, when he shall appear in the glory of His Father, with His holy angels. All our professions, all on which we have rested, will be in vain then, if we have made light of the offers of His mercy and the free invitations of His grace in the day of our merciful visitation. How light will all appear to us then, in which we had placed so much importance in life—lighter than vanity—utterly worthless,—nay, detestable as having seduced us from Christ ; and how unspeakably important those things which we so lightly esteem on earth, when it is too late to repair our error ?


But there is still another way in which professors of the Gospel often and greatly make light of Christ : viz, in not having due regard to the influence of their conduct upon His cause, whether in regard to the church, or in regard to the world. If we rightly esteem Christ, we will be very jealous of His honor, and very zealous for it ; we will be very fearful lest we belie by our conduct in any respect, the faith which we profess, and thus give reason to any, to doubt the sincerity of our profession, or to stumble at the word, or that others should make our inconsistencies a plea for licentiousness. We will be very earnest, my friends, if we be indeed earnest in Christ's cause, to shew forth the grace of Christ, not only in purity of doctrine, but in the consistency of our lives, that we may bear both a true and an influential testimony for Jesus. We will be very solicitous that our example may so honor Him before the world, that it may win others to come to and follow Him ; for we cannot truly and warmly love Christ without desiring to shew forth His grace, and to declare to others the great things which the Lord hath done for our souls. We cannot truly value the salvation of the Gospel without desiring to extend the knowledge and the influence of it. We

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cannot realize the blessings of our own calling, and not desire to bring others to share in them, nor realize the danger and misery of the condition from which we have been through grace delivered, without longing, and laboring, and praying for the deliverance and salvation of others. How should we shudder to see a man rush in the way of instant and certain death? Our first impulse would be to rush forward, even at imminent risk to ourselves, and interpose for his rescue. And shall the believer who has been awakened to realize the awful terrors of judgment and the wrath of God revealed against impenitent transgressors, be unconcerned at the condition of those who are rushing upon eternal ruin and misery, and do nothing to rescue or even to warn them? Surely, my friends, they who truly know the value of souls, from having been brought to know Christ, cannot feel lightly in regard to the conversion and salvation of sinners, or in regard to the proclaiming of the gospel and the extension of the means of grace; but alas, how much lightness and indifference, and coldness in this respect, are exhibited by the professing people of God. What multitudes are allowed unwarned, unheeded, to pursue the paths of ruin. We fear, my friends, we must have all much blame to take to ourselves, in regard to this matter; not only in regard to great coldness and unconcern about the state of the heathen world, but in regard to the fate of multitudes, whose downward course to everlasting ruin we are too callously beholding, and which we raise too feeble a voice, if we interfere at all, to hinder or to impede. Let us remember that this too is making light of Christ and of His doctrine. Let us think of the testimony which it bears against the liveliness or healthfulness of our own spiritual condition; and let us strive to realize more fully our own privileges, and to feel more deeply our own responsibilities, that we may no longer incur the guilt and the danger of making light of Christ.

SERMON VIII.

Finally, brethren, farewell.—II. Cor. XIII., 11.

HEN about, in the Providence of God, to be withdrawn from you for a season, I trust you will excuse me in departing on this occasion from the strict and proper style of preaching, and using towards you a little more freedom and familiarity of address. Permit me, in the first place, to say that my contemplated absence from you, for a time, and my purposed voyage, is not the result of my wearying in the Lord's work among you. No, my friends, I trust that by the grace of God, I am willing to spend and to be spent in this work, that I count it the highest honor and the highest privilege a man can enjoy, to be permitted to occupy even the most humble position, in the church of Christ, and to exercise the calling of winning souls to Him; and I pray the Lord that I may never sink so far as to regard the Lord's work in the gospel of His Son, as a mere task, from which relief is to be coveted for the sake of worldly ease and relaxation. I am not deserting my post here, I trust, for the sake of mere pleasure. The circumstances of the country are such, the condition of our church is such, and the destitution of ordinances which prevails among thousands and thousands of our Presbyterian population, is so great, that no mere desire of ease and relaxation would warrant a minister in absenting himself from his charge, for even a short season, and calling upon his brethren—many of them already overburdened with labors—to assume additional labors, through his absence, solely to unburden himself. The Lord's work in the Church in general, is of too responsible a character; and a minister's work among his people, is of too serious a nature to be lightly interrupted. And it has been, my friends, a matter of serious and prayerful deliberation

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with me, whether amid the destitution of laborers and of the means of grace in connection with our Church, when the fields are white for the harvest, and whether, considering the evils which follow from the interruption of a Pastor's regular ministrations among his flock, it was consistent with my duty to absent myself from my assigned sphere of labor, and ask my brethren in the ministry to afford you supply of preaching, during my absence, to the denying of their own flocks. The grounds on which I have come to this determination, I need, perhaps, hardly state to you. Besides duties of a more private and personal character, which I have felt to be binding upon me, there are others which more affect my relations to yourselves and the discharge of the duties of my office, in relation to you, and among these the recruiting of bodily health; for besides the necessity of this to the endurance of the labor and fatigue which must be undergone in order to the full discharge of pastoral duty, while the body is so enfeebled as to be easily over-fatigued by needful out-door labor in the work of the ministry, the powers of the mind cannot be in vigorous and healthy exercise, and the character of a pastor's pulpit ministrations will necessarily be deteriorated, if his preparations for them must be made under the pressure of bodily languor. They will, unavoidably be more or less marked by the enfeebling effects of this languor. I trust that, by the blessing of the Lord upon the means used, a temporary absence may, as I am given to hope, be beneficial to me in this respect; and if so, it is my desire, and will be my endeavour, I trust, that you shall reap the benefits in increased activity and energy in my ministrations among you as your pastor. But, moreover, the life and duties of most ministers of the Gospel, and especially in this country, are by no means favorable to the high development of the intellectual powers, or to high attainments in those branches of knowledge and general acquirements which are so important to the efficient discharge of the duties of the ministerial office, and to enable a pastor to take that position of

influence in the world, and in society, which will not supersede or keep in the back ground, his spiritual character, but which will enable him to carry it with weight and authority into every sphere of society, and into every condition of life.

The monotony of the routine duties of a minister's life, the unvaried character of his pursuits, the limited nature of his intercourse with other minds, even among his brethren of the ministry, the circumscribed locality even in which he moves, are apt to lead to a monotony of mind and modes of thinking; and I believe it would tend greatly to promote the vigor and efficiency especially of the pulpit exercises of ministers, were more opportunity afforded them of hearing others preach, and of holding intercourse with each other upon subjects connected with Christian doctrine, the care of souls and the interests of the Church, than they can generally enjoy; and I would fain hope, my friends, that, in this respect, my temporary absence from you may ultimately redound to your profiting, if it be the will of the Great Head of the Church to bring me back to you in health and safety. But, still farther, I trust that my absence may, through the blessing of the Most High, be made conducive to the interests of His cause in this land, and especially of our Church, if I may be an instrument in raising up the cry in our highly-favoured Fatherland, amid the great destitution which prevails in regard to Gospel ministrations among the scattered Presbyterian population of our country—'come over and help us'—and in inducing qualified laborers to listen to the calls which are made from multitudes of their fellow-countrymen, hungering and thirsting after the ordinances of the Word, to come and occupy this portion of the Lord's vineyard, already white for the harvest.

I feel encouraged in having come to the resolution of absenting myself for a season, by the assurances I have received that you not only concur in my doing so, but approve and sympathize in my motives; for, had I merely had the object of pleasure in my contemplated voyage, I feel that

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I would have shrunk from the perils by the way which have of late been so awfully exhibited among and around us ; but feeling my course clear as to the path of duty, and enjoying, as I believe I do, your sanction, I can place myself with confidence in the hands of Him, who hath assured us that the hairs of our head are all numbered, and that not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without His knowledge and permission. The cordiality and readiness, also, with which my brethren of the ministry have offered to take upon themselves the charge of supplying you with the services of the Lord's day, give me, at the same time, assurance of their sympathy with me in the matter, and that you, in the meantime, will not be deprived of the means of grace.

Having said so much in regard to these matters, let me now, for a little, offer you the word of exhortation. In the first place, my brethren, hold fast to the faith of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and be not moved away from the hope of your calling. It hath been my earnest desire and endeavour to declare to you and enforce upon you the will of God, for your salvation, as revealed in the Scriptures of truth,—neither to add to nor to take from the Word, but to declare to you the whole counsel of God ; to preach to you Jesus Christ as God manifested in the flesh, crucified for the sins of His people, and risen again for their justification ; and that though the doctrine of the Cross ever hath been and ever will be an offence to the world—“to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness”—that it is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation, to all who believe. I have ever sought to impress upon you the momentous truth that there is no other way given under Heaven among men whereby we must be saved, than the Lord Jesus Christ, no other way of return for sinners to God, and of acceptance with Him ; and that they who reject the offered salvation, reject the counsel of God against themselves, and must, in accordance with the declaration of Scripture, perish amid their unbelief in an everlasting de-

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struction from the presence of the Lord, that the condemnation must remain upon them. "The soul that sinneth it shall die."

Never for a moment, my friends, let these things slip from your minds. Let Christ be the foundation—the *only* foundation of your hope; for none other can stand amid the flood of trials and temptations and afflictions which more or less must assail you, and none other will bear you up amid the devouring torrent of Divine wrath, which shall at last sweep into interminable, unutterable misery, the inpenitent and unbelieving workers of iniquity. But, Christ is a sure foundation—as sure as the power and the promise of Jehova^h can make it, against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail, and a tried and a proved foundation, for multitudes, who could find peace and comfort and rest nowhere else, have gloried in the cross of Christ, by which they have been crucified to the world and the world to them; and, in the conviction that they are justified by faith, have found peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, even that peace which the world cannot give and cannot take away. Have you found this hope, my friends? Have you built upon this foundation? Have you known this precious peace? Oh, then, you will not let it go. You will ever be seeking to make your interest in Christ, and, in the privileges of His great salvation, more sure. Having truly tasted that the Lord is gracious, you will not cease to hunger and thirst after the provisions of the Lord's grace, while Christ has to bestow; and who ever exhausted the fulness that is in Him? You will be eager to receive. You will be drawing daily and hourly the life of your souls from Him, knowing that it is alone derived from and sustained by Him. Be earnest then, my friends, let me beseech you, in the work of your salvation. Seek the assurance that Christ has wrought out a work for you, in that He is working a good work in you,—that He is working in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

This leads me, in the second place, my brethren, to exhort you to be especially careful to maintain the purity, the holiness, the consistency of the Christian life—for though I have ever endeavoured to set before you the great doctrine of salvation, by faith alone; and that Jesus Christ received by faith, as the Lamb of God, is the only ground of the sinner's justification and righteousness before God—I have endeavoured no less to enforce upon you the essential doctrine that faith without works is dead; that *that* faith which is the gift of God, and which betokens the new birth of the soul, through the transforming power of the Son of God, will work by love, and purify the heart to the overcoming of the world. He who truly believes what the Lord Jesus has done for his soul, the guilt and aggravation of those sins which He has washed out in His atoning blood, and the unspeakably glorious privileges of His grace and of His great salvation, cannot but love Him, who, at so inconceivable a cost of humiliation and suffering, through concern for perishing souls, wrought out these things in his behalf. Examine then, my friends, your faith and your profession by such tests. Are they proved by your truly and earnestly striving to live wholly to the glory of the Redeemer? Does the devoted affection of your hearts to Christ make every sin, every short-coming, in thought, in word, or in deed, reproach and humble and afflict you—fill you with heart-felt sorrow and stimulate you to a more entire conformity to His holy will?

Beware of deceiving yourselves in this all-important matter. You can have no evidence of an interest in the redemption of Christ,—no true ground of hope in Him, if He be not an object of paramount interest to you,—if He be not reigning in your hearts, captivating them to Himself, engaging all your faculties and energies in His service, making it your constant study how you may most honor and best serve Him in your thoughts, words and actions. Oh, how utterly vain is a profession of the faith of Jesus, by the man whose

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religion is a mere form, which has no seat in the heart, which may mould the outer man into the form of holiness—but has none of the living spirit,—the man whose heart inwardly rejoices at every possible escape from the restraints of religion, consistent with the maintenance of the outward character, and the avoiding of the disquieting fears of conscience,—whose religion is a real slavery, a constant, irksome restraint upon his desires and affections, which would freely go forth in the business, the pursuits, the pleasures, the carnal gratifications of life, but have no forth-going towards Christ. What a many-formed idol is the world, my friends; and in one shape or another how does it engross and enslave the hearts of men; how often and how fatally is it the great god of their idolatry, and the object of their untiring service, while the true God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are worshipped but in form and in name. Oh, watch and pray against this soul-destroying delusion of Satan, lest any of you be entangled by it, and fancy that you have a hope towards God through the Lord Jesus Christ—while all your works, and all the treasures which you are amassing, and all the good which you are striving to lay up for yourselves—all is based upon the deceitful and perishing foundation of the world. Let your religion be the great business of your lives—ruling your hearts, making the world and the flesh subservient to Christ and your souls, and under all the circumstances and in all the pursuits and occupations of life, exhibiting the paramount object of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness—of attending to the interests of the soul and laying up treasures for Heaven.

But, in the third place, though I have preached to you the doctrine of your absolute and entire dependence upon God, and not only as the God of Creation, and of Providence, but as the God of grace; that He is the beginning and end of your salvation; the author and the finisher of your faith; that except the Father draw you, you cannot come to Jesus, as your Saviour; that the faith

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by which you must be saved is the gift of God ; that of the mere motion of your own unrenewed hearts you can neither believe on Christ, nor abide in the faith of Christ, nor bring forth the fruits of holiness ; that without Christ ye can do nothing ; that you have no light, no strength, no sufficiency of your own ; that all the glory of your salvation is the Lord's, because it is His own work, while at the same time you are called upon, exhorted, yea, entreated by the word of God, to believe, to labor in the use of means, to watch, to pray, to run in the race, to strive for the mastery, to fight the good fight, and to work out with fidelity, diligence and perseverance your own salvation, with fear and trembling, I have ever sought to teach you that, while salvation is of God only, and holiness is derived from Him alone, your sins and your corruptions are all your own ; that the responsibility of them lies upon yourselves, and the condemnation of them shall be visited against each individually, and that, except ye repent and believe, ye must all perish under sin. Beware of any other doctrine ; beware of being seduced by your own carnal hearts to think of sin as other than it really is, or of God as other than the Gospel represents Him, or to seek a way of salvation more consistent with and more agreeable to your own natural inclinations. But seek to know and to rest upon the will of God, revealed in the Scriptures for your salvation, as your only safety. No other way can bring you to God ; no other Saviour can save you ; no man can lay other foundation than that which is laid. Be not led astray through the pride of your hearts, through philosophy and vain deceit, to think yourselves wise above what is written. But humbly submit yourselves to the simple teaching of the word and Son of God, which alone can make you wise unto salvation.

Let me entreat you, my friends, to be diligent and earnest in the reading of the word and prayer. These are the great sources of spiritual knowledge, nourishment and grace ; and forsake not the assembling of yourselves together in the ordinances of the Lord's house, and fail

not to keep holy the Sabbath day to the Lord's service. As impossible is it to preserve the spiritual life of the soul in health and vigour, without the regular use of the means of grace, as it were to think of sustaining the natural life without regular supplies of food. Remember that they, who truly love the Lord, will love the Lord's house and the Lord's ordinances. One day spent there will be to them better than a thousand; and they that are truly concerned about the work of grace in their souls will not be careless or indifferent in regard to the means of grace. Be alike earnest in seeking the Lord in the house of prayer, in the social meeting, in the family and in the closet. There are two evils to which the absence of a minister from his flock are apt to lead—the one, carelessness in regard to regular attendance on the means of grace, and the other, a desire of change and novelty. The danger, on the one hand, is that of neglecting and undervaluing the means of grace; and the danger, on the other, that of resting and depending upon *them*, rather than on Christ. Guard against each of these as detrimental to your spiritual interests. Do not suppose that you can be safe while despising the ordinances of God; and do not worship the gifts of the preacher so as to forget Him to whom he is commissioned to point you as your only safety; but value those who lead you to Jesus, and gratefully improve their labors among you.

Fourthly, my brethren, strive to be of the same mind, to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and, that you may be so, let everyone look not on his own things only, but on the things of others. "Be kindly affectioned one to another, in brotherly love, in honor, preferring one another." Without any officious interference with the affairs of your neighbours, ever encourage a kindly interest in each other's welfare, rejoice in each other's joys, sympathize with each other's trials and sorrows, be ever ready to lend the willing hand to help, and to pour in the soothing, healing balm to comfort. Above all, my friends, have a concern for souls,

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have a tender compassion for those who are perishing in ignorance, or unbelief, or carelessness. If you value truly your own privileges, you cannot be indifferent to the spiritual state and eternal prospects of your friends, neighbours and fellow-men. You will use every suitable opportunity of warning the unwary or the careless, of reproof and testifying against sin, and instructing the ignorant, of confirming and establishing the weak, and of pointing out and recommending the paths of religion and holiness, by your precept and example. Evince that you regard religion not only as the one thing needful, but as the thing most precious and desirable, if thus you may win souls to Christ. Pray earnestly for each other. What a precious bond is prayer between the members of Christ's body. It bears a hallowing, sweetening influence, transfusing itself from soul to soul. It is the most genuine indication of deep interest, and of pure disinterested affection. It is the breathing forth of the longings and the sympathies of the heart, in behalf of our neighbors towards God; and while the fervent, believing prayer of the righteous man will not remain unanswered, it will return at the same time, like the dews from Heaven, upon his own soul, for its refreshment and invigoration. Bear each other, therefore, my friends, on your spirits at a throne of prayer, and a mutual blessing will assuredly follow. Feel that you are members of the same body—professing one Lord, one Saviour, one baptism, one God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—that you have a common interest in the same cause—that you are alike injured by its injury, and profited by its advancement. Seek, therefore, to be united in this cause, not only in your desires, but in your labors, for its advancement. Stimulate and encourage one another to work, and in the work. Cooperate with one another in every good work, in every means by which the interests of our Zion may be promoted, her efficiency as a Church increased, and her sphere of usefulness be more fully occupied or extended. When each lends a hand, and shows a willing heart,—

solemn as the warnings which are given to us may be, and though they may excite the sensibilities for the time, how little do they influence the conduct? Yet, my friends, strive to keep these things before your view; strive to be living in the world, as if every moment might be your last; to be always ready, whatever the event may be, that living you may live unto the Lord, and dying you may die unto the Lord—that, living or dying, you may be His. Let your affections be set upon eternal things. Live disentangled from the world and the flesh, from the perishable affections of time, and let Christ be the centre of your affections, the beloved of your souls, your hope of glory—that while to you to live is Christ, to die may be unspeakable gain.

My friends, the period of my connection with this congregation is now verging upon twenty years. Many brethren in the ministry have, during that period, been summoned from the sphere of their active and useful labours in the inscrutable providence of God. Our church has passed through severe trials and discouraging providences, but has, at the same time, enjoyed many gracious tokens of the Lord's presence and favor. Our congregation has seen many changes. Members, young and old, have passed into eternity, to whom the hidden things of the Lord have been made known. The middle-aged have grown to hoar hairs, the young to manhood and womanhood. Not one, I believe, who, twenty years ago, was numbered among our little flock, now remains in connection with it, save myself; and I feel this, my friends, to be a solemn dispensation, especially on the eve of parting with you—parting, I would fain hope, if it be the Lord's will, but for a season, and yet to return to minister among you in holy things, and to dispense to you the bread and the water of life, while the Lord may honor me to do so. I have no greater desire, my friends, than to spend and be spent in the Lord's service among you, if I may be a means, in the hands of God, of building up some in the hopes, the privileges, the encouragements and

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consolations of the Gospel. My heart, I feel sure, will be with you not less in my absence, than when present with you. It cannot but be expected but that there shall be changes among you, and I shall anxiously look for tidings of you all. It will be my rejoicing to hear of your welfare, and especially of your steadfastness in the faith, and of your abounding in the fruits of godliness. Oh that the Lord might work a great work in you, and show forth His redeeming love and power in the quickening and reviving of many souls, that He might make one and all of you to abound in peace and joy in believing. In your afflictions, believe me, I shall sympathize, though my sorrowing shall be overborne by rejoicing, if present trials, which are by comparison light, and but for a moment, shall be made effectual to work out for you a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. We know not, my friends, what may be severally appointed for us. Let us seek to be found in the path of duty, as the only path of true safety, that path in which we have the promise of the Lord, that all things shall work together for our good; and in this assurance shall we be enabled freely to resign ourselves to the Lord's will. Let us bear each other mutually on our spirits at the throne of grace. Let me and mine have an interest in your prayers. You, I trust, shall never be forgotten in mine. If the Lord shall be pleased to permit us again to see each other, face to face, in the flesh, may it be in heartfelt gratitude for His sparing mercy, in having preserved us, it may be, amid many perils, seen and unseen; and may the Lord's goodness and sparing mercy increase our zeal, our diligence, our devotedness in His work. And now, my friends, farewell. May the God of peace be with you. May the everlasting arms be around you. May the wings of your Heavenly Father's love overshadow you. May you be alike protected from danger and kept from evil. May you be guarded from the arrow that flieth in darkness, and the pestilence that wasteth at noon-day, from the snares of the world, the temptations of the

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flesh, and the fiery darts of the Devil. "Now, to Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen."



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SERMON IX.

*And she said Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs
which fall from their master's table.—Matt. xv., 27.*

THE incident with which our text is connected took place on the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, whither our Lord had gone, either in the exercise of His ministry, or with the purpose of, for a period, withdrawing Himself from the persecutions and hostility of the Scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem, whom He had offended by His faithful preaching, and by His unflinching condemnation of their sins. The portions of the country along the coasts, more remote from Jerusalem, and especially commercial towns, like Tyre and Sidon, were more frequented than others by the descendants of the original inhabitants of the land—Canaanites, and heathen idolaters, except in so far as they may have been leavened with and had their religion modified by that of the Jews, among whom they dwelt. The woman referred to in our text was one of this class. She had come to the knowledge and been brought under the influence of the Jewish faith. She had been led to believe in the promises of their Scriptures in regard to the Messiah to come. She probably had felt that these promises were not without interest and concern to her, though not a daughter of Abraham, after the flesh. She had, perhaps, pondered over and grounded a hope for herself, on the intimation that the Messiah should come not only to be the glory of His people Israel, but a light to lighten the Gentiles. Hearing the fame of the preaching and the miracles of Jesus, she had believed on Him as the Messiah, the Son of God, the root of Jesse, the offspring of David. This woman had a daughter grievously vexed with the Devil. This was a deep affliction to her; her beloved child's sufferings entered into her own soul. She

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would have done or sacrificed anything for her relief, and no greater earthly boon could have been conferred upon her, than the healing of her daughter. Probably all other means, and every possible endeavor within her reach, for her daughter's cure, had been exhausted, when she heard of Jesus coming to those parts. Inspired with the belief that He was able to effect the cure, and with the hope that her sorrowful case might excite compassion, and that her grief and her tears might plead for her, and encouraged by the fame of Jesus' many works of mercy, and emboldened by her despair of other help, she came and cried after Him with importunate earnestness, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Our Lord seemed not to hear her, and pursued His way, apparently unheeding her cries. The disciples, probably themselves annoyed, and supposing that He also was vexed by the importunity of the woman, besought Him, saying, "Send her away, for she crieth after us." Then Jesus answered and said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Not discouraged by this unfavorable reply, but rather taking courage by having gained His ear, she drew near and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, help me; Thou canst if Thou wilt; it may not be within the terms of your commission, but it is within the reach of your ability. I am not a child of Israel, but I am an afflicted creature, and I entreat Thy help." Our Lord again answered her humble entreaty, and with yet more apparent harshness, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." Then comes the affecting words of the text, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."

The first thing that strikes us in these words is the humility of the woman. "Truth, Lord." She does not controvert His statement. She does not deny the fact that Jesus was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; that, as a Canaanitish woman, she had no claim upon Him. She does not question the justice of the ap-

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pointment. She does not plead any personal claims, but she pleads that if there were but the crumbs of mercy still in store, that mercy might be extended to her in her affliction. Her pride was not stirred up, nor her anger excited by the reproachful and offensive language addressed to her. Sorely as it must have wounded her feelings, and well as she might have hurled back with just indignation the reproach, had it come from some haughty Jewish formalist, who, while arrogantly calling himself a child of Abraham, yet did not the works of Abraham, but sought to cover by a daring hypocrisy and pretence of religion the depravity of his heart and the abominable wickedness of his life, as coming from Jesus, she bowed under it with humble submission and acknowledgment of the justice of the charge. "Truth, Lord. I am vile. I am as a dog. I acknowledge that Thou mayest apply to me with perfect propriety this degrading term, and I unrepiningly submit to it. I am no child of Abraham, either by descent, by adoption, or by works of righteousness. But does this place me beyond the claims of compassion or the reach of mercy? Even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table, and the least crumbs of thy mercy I will receive with thankfulness. I do not ask, I do not expect, children's fare or children's favor; I will gratefully receive even the dog's portion of the barest leavings of thy grace." What a lesson is here given to the world, my friends,—yea, and to Christians too. How does the proud heart of man rebel against the declarations of his natural depravity, and of his actual sin. He will submit to anything rather than humble himself as a vile, corrupt, justly condemned, helpless transgressor, who must seek for all and receive all from God of His free grace; for though there are few perhaps who will not acknowledge that they are sinners, so long as the confession merely places them on the same level with other men, so long as it implies no individuality in their guilt, does not bring it home to themselves in such a way as to sting their consciences,

alarm their fears and wound their pride, yet, many who will confess themselves sinners, and fancy that they are, will be offended and angry if their sins be pointed out, and guilt thus imputed to them. The mere confession of guilt, in general, by no means implies an apprehension of individual guilt before God; and many, therefore, will confess themselves to be sinners without reserve, and, alas, without shame; who will not bear to be told of their sins, and that they have deserved the wrath of God on account of them. Had not the woman of Canaan been a truly humble believer, she would not have acted as she did; her offended pride would have overcome even her motherly feelings; she would even have submitted to be reproached as a dog, as a contemptible individual of a despised and degraded race. She would have turned away in anger with the thought—What can I expect from one who thus insults me? Am I a whit worse than the haughty Jews who thus arrogantly assume a superiority over us? If they have more light or higher privileges, as they allege, than we have, do they show the fruits of it in better lives? Are they not sensual, unjust, extortioners, and given to all manner of wickedness, even as others, and why should I be thus reproached? But she had faith given to her to look to Jesus as the Son of God, the predicted Messiah, and had grace given to her to look upon herself as a poor, sinful, helpless creature; unworthy in herself of any mercy, and deserving of any reproach which might be cast upon her by God, and seeking compassion and an answer to her requests alone, in that God had made Himself known as a God of mercy, and in that she saw in Jesus, in His works of wonder and compassion, the Saviour of sinners, and the healer of the broken-hearted.

If then, my friends, we would receive anything of the Lord, we must come with like humility, we must not rebel against the reproofs and reproaches of God's word, and of God's ministers, when they speak to us in faithfulness. We must not let pride cast off from us the imputations of sin, or think that anything which the word of God says

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of sin or of sinners, as they are viewed by God, is too bad to be said of us. We must not compare ourselves with others, and think because we have not committed sins which others have, or because we have done works which others have not, that we can therefore plead any merit with God. By one sin, even if we had only one sin, we have become guilty of all; and even had our works any merit, this could not wash away the guilt of the one sin. We are but unprofitable servants. If men are kept from sin in some things, in their unrenewed state, what has kept them but a restraining Providence, and not love to God; fear of consequences, not filial obedience? Or if they have done some good things, it hath not been the glory of God, but the praise of men by which they have been actuated. And if any one through grace hath been made to differ, who hath made him to differ? Is it not God only? We must all confess our utter vileness, our deserved liability to the wrath of God, and everlasting misery on account of our sins, and our utter helplessness of ourselves, and our entire dependence on the mercy and grace of God, revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, for pardon, and salvation—not merely that we must look to Him for what we cannot do of ourselves, as a complement or filling up of the insufficiency of our own works, but as all our salvation, as the very ground, sum and substance of it; whose blood alone, and not our repentance, or our good intentions, or our good deeds, or our religious observances, or our outward privileges can atone for, or deliver us from our sins; and in whose righteousness we can alone stand accepted before God, and through the renewing and sanctifying power of whose Spirit, we can alone bring forth fruit pleasing to God, for Christ's sake.

Whatever, therefore, we may be in the sight of men, my friends, we must feel ourselves to be in the sight of God—like the convicted leper—and cry “unclean, unclean;” and with the feeling of utter helplessness of the poor publican, make our petitions, “Lord be merciful to us, sin-

ners ;" or, like the woman of our text, acknowledge that every reproach which the Bible brings against sin or sinner lies at our door, and say, "Truth, Lord, we confess all our vileness ; we have nothing to plead but thy mercy and thine own faithfulness in thy promises ; we would be utterly emptied of ourselves that we might receive all out of thy grace and out of Christ's fulness ; we would cast away all that is our own, not only as insufficient and worthless, but as polluted ; that Christ dwell in us and be formed in us as our hope of glory, for there is nothing in us by nature but what is corrupt ; and if Christ be in us, and in so far as He is occupying our hearts, the flesh and the world, and sin and Satan must be purged out ; room must be made by the expulsion of these, in order that Christ may enter in. We must feel, my friends, that the least portion of Christ is better than all the world besides, and that the very crumbs, the very leavings of His grace, as it were, are more than our desert, and what we would thankfully give up all else to receive at His hand ; not despising even the lowest place among His people, but regarding it better even than the highest in the world ; willing to be regarded and reproached as a dog, so that we may pick up the merest crumbs of Divine grace.

In how far is this the case with you, my friends ? In how far have you by grace been enabled to display the self-abasement and humility of this poor woman ? If ye are yet unhumbléd because of sin, and are trusting in yourselves, ye have not yet known or received Christ, nor are you receiving grace from Him ; but in so far as you have been humbled and emptied of yourselves to give place to Jesus, I know that you have experienced that His presence is precious, that His grace is sweet, and that the more you have hungered and thirsted, the more you have been filled and the more your souls have been satisfied.

But, again, the next feature in the character of the woman of Canaan, which we are called upon to remark, is her faith. She had not the privilege of being a Jew. In her outward condition, she was an outcast from the

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hope of Israel, and an alien from the covenant of promise. She had not been devoted to God in infancy, nor instructed from a child in His holy oracles. But the Lord, who is no respecter of persons, but calleth whom He will, had opened her mind to give heed to the Scriptures, and she was enabled, amid the general blindness of those who were more favored in their outward privileges, to recognize in Jesus the Lord, the Son of David, and believe on Him as the hope of Israel. And how often is it, my friends, that they who have least evidence, humanly speaking, have most faith, showing that it is not the evidence which gives faith, but the Spirit of God which opens the naturally darkened and unwilling mind to receive it. "If they believe not Moses and the prophets, so neither would they believe were one to arise from the dead," said our Lord. Let this be impressed upon us, my friends, that it is not want of evidence for the truth which hinders faith, but want of inclination to receive the truth, and, therefore, an unwillingness to receive the evidence. The believer does not believe against evidence, or without evidence. He is able to give a reason for the hope which is in him; but he is satisfied with the assurance that God speaks in the Scriptures, and that therefore the Scriptures reveal the will of God to our faith. The unbeliever believes not, because he seeks testimony for the truth from other sources than God's testimony; and because he cannot understand the whole of the truth revealed, because the mysteries of the Gospel, the deep things of God are not within the grasp of his natural understanding, he will not believe on or receive them, for he looks not to the testimony of God as the ground of his reception of them. This is a fertile source of unbelief, my friends. Be concerned, therefore, to know whether God speaks to you in His word—whether it conveys a message from Him to you in reference to your soul's salvation. Assured of this, you will have less difficulty in receiving or comprehending what it contains. For they who alike seek to know and to do the will of God,

have the promise that they shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God. And believers have this testimony within themselves, that the more they have obeyed the truth the more hath the truth approved itself to them, and the more have they found obscurities and perplexities cleared away from their path, and a plain way opened up for them.

Is this the case with you, my friends? Are you convinced that it is God who speaks in the Bible, and that He speaks to you? Are you simply desirous to know, that you may obey the Lord's will, and put your dependence on His promises? The conviction that it is God in whom you believe—that it is His word which you follow, and His promise and power in which you confide, is the ground and the only solid ground of faith. And the more entirely and unreservedly our faith is fixed upon God, the firmer will be our purpose, the more steadfast our hope and the more consistent our obedience. Many who have much head knowledge of the Bible, have no faith in it as God's word; and many who have little knowledge, through little opportunity of knowing, have great faith to walk up to what they know. Few were the privileges, and very limited probably the knowledge of the Canaanitish woman. But she had a firm conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, and able to help her, and she obtained the testimony from our Lord. Oh, woman, great is thy faith.

While you seek, my friends, to know the mind of the Lord in what the Saviour reveals in the Word, for your information and direction, do not seek to be wise above what is written, or to pry curiously into things not now revealed to knowledge, but to faith; and do not weaken your faith by making your comprehension of the mysteries revealed, a requisite to your believing; but build your faith upon the faithfulness of Him who hath revealed them to you. If you give up faith in what God hath made known in the Scriptures as the ground of your hope, and as the rule of your conduct, you cast yourselves adrift on a trackless sea of uncertainty and scepticism; you throw

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away the only chart and compass which can guide you in safety, and give you the feeling of security in pursuing your course, which alone can keep your souls in peace. God's promises, my friends, are all made to faith, and faith alone can receive anything from Him; for if we have not faith we cannot ask; and if we ask not we cannot receive; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him. And what shall not faith obtain? God is not straitened in giving what is for our good, and for His glory. If we receive not, it is because we are straitened in asking. "If ye ask anything in my name," said our Lord to His disciples, "the Father will give it you."

What an encouragement to faith, then, does our text supply to us? The woman of Canaan, by faith, obtained her request. "O, woman," said our Lord, "great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt,"—and her daughter was made whole from that very hour. If we exercise like faith, my friends, shall not we receive like answers, in regard to what the Lord promises to bestow? Let your desire and your prayer then be,—“Lord, increase our faith! Lord, help our unbelief!” Be assured that there is no lack in Christ, if you are only enabled through faith to lay open the sluices of His grace. The same stream that hath enriched the souls of the chiefest saints of God, is alike free and efficacious to all who freely seek and draw from it. It is being emptied of self and filled with Christ, that makes the sinner a saint. And the greatest saint is he, who has most of Christ.

But yet a third feature of the character of the woman of Canaan, was perseverance—her earnest, yet not presumptuous importunity. This was the result of faith, stimulated by an anxious desire for the attainment of her object. Her beloved child's condition wrung her heart with continual sorrow. She believed fully that Jesus could grant her relief. She believed that He was compassionate, and she threw her case upon Him with all the vehemence of a soul ready to sink in despair, if this, her

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last effort, was not successful ; and, notwithstanding the apparent neglect, coldness, repulse, and even contempt and insult by which her request was met on each renewed application, she desisted not from her purpose. When unheeded, she still pressed her petition. When repulsed, she acknowledged that she had no claim but what mercy might allow—but still she persevered. When reproached, she humbly bore it—but yet faith and desire urged her prayer, and she was heard in that she believed. Nor is this a solitary instance by which encouragement is given to perseverance, and even importunity in prayer. Jacob's wrestling with the angel,—the man who came asking bread of a neighbour, after he had retired to rest, in order to entertain a friend, and who obtained it only in consequence of his continued knocking,—the widow and the unjust judge—are all cases which warrant us not only to ask in faith, but not to be discouraged by not receiving an answer ; amid seeming repulse, to take no refusal ; and when reproached, not to allow pride to rob us of the boon we ask.

Were there but more earnest desires, and more believing prayers, and more perseverance in prayer, what a different aspect would the professing Church of Christ in the world present ? How much is prayer a form, not a reality ; a task, not a privilege ? Things are asked in word which are not desired by the heart ; or things are sought without faith that they will be bestowed, and therefore so little answer to prayer.

Did men truly realize their pitiable condition as sinners, how destitute and helpless they are, except through the grace of Christ, what humiliating of themselves before God would there be ? What earnest seeking of Him, through Christ, for pardon and for grace ? What unceasing, what importunate pleadings and entreaties ; what wrestling with God would there be ? How would the places where prayer is wont to be made be thronged ? Why is it that men are not easily discouraged in seeking the things of this world, but that they have keen desires, an earnest

purpose, and strong faith? Were the desire equally strong for heavenly things, and were faith in the power and promise of God equally assured, there would be like earnestness of purpose, diligence of endeavor, and importunity of prayer. Judge yourselves, my friends, by these tests—which you are placing first, the things of the world or the things of Christ; which you are most earnest about, seeking most perseveringly. We fear there are many who are satisfied with the crumbs, just because they have no taste for the Gospel feast; not because the crumbs are all they hope for or dare to ask, but because they desire no more. Many pray merely to be seen of men, merely for the sake of a profession; they ask nothing and they desire nothing of what they can obtain from Christ, and nothing would more disappoint them than to have the words of their petitions answered. They love sin, and do not desire to be delivered from it. Obedience is irksome, and they do not desire it. The world is dear to them, and they would neither forsake nor be taken from it. Heaven is uncongenial to them, and they have no desire after it. God is feared, and they seek not His presence. Are any of you complaining of unanswered prayer—see that this is not the cause.

We may draw from our text the following truths, which are of vital importance:—

1st. That we must not pride ourselves, nor rest on our privileges; that these of themselves can avail us nothing; that, unless improved, they only involve us in greater guilt, and bring down upon us a heavier condemnation. "He is not a Jew," said Paul, "who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." The Jews boasted that they were the children of Abraham; but our Lord told them that they were not the true seed of Abraham, for they did not the works of Abraham, but the works of their father, the Devil; and that the Queen of the South, and the

men of Nineveh, and even Sodom and Gomorrah, should rise up against that generation in the day of judgment, and condemn it. So will it be with us, my friends, if we lean upon our privileges, and do not improve them; if we do not remember that to whom much is given, of them also shall much be required. But how many are there who seem satisfied with a name, to live; who, because the name of Christians is accorded to them by the world or by the Church, because they have been baptized and are admitted to ordinances, seem to presume that they are Christians. They are willing to think so, and as others count them such, they take the matter for granted, and live to the flesh or to the world at their ease, without enquiry. We fear there are many such nominal Christians, who never seriously scrutinize their Christianity. But though it may satisfy the world, will it, my friends, satisfy God? Oh no, my brethren. He judgeth not as man judgeth; He judgeth the heart, and will alone accept the service of the heart. It will not only profit you nothing to join in the services and the ordinances of the Church, as a form; it will bring the condemnation of a most heinous sin upon your souls, in coming before God with the mockery of an outward worship, while you offer to Him no spiritual service. Search and try yourselves, my friends, that ye be not judged of the Lord.

2nd. Faith in Christ will save the soul, whether the believer be Jew or Gentile, bond or free, the least or the chief of sinners. "Believe and thou shalt be saved," is the blessed assurance; no limitation, no conditions. Believe and confess that thou art a sinner, and that Jesus is able and willing to save thee, and receive the salvation which He offers, and that salvation is yours, whatever your sins may have been, whatever your condition may be. The jailor who cried to Paul and Silas,—“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” who had only then heard of Jesus, believed and was saved. Many a poor heathen, convinced of his sin, and seeking peace and deliverance, when hearing of Jesus the Son of God and the Saviour

of sinners, has felt that this was a Saviour for him, has believed, and manifested the work of the Saviour in a renewed heart and a sanctified life. Many in humble circumstances, with little knowledge, but under deep convictions of sin and of the suitableness of the Gospel to their case, have, like the blind man, been enabled to say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief," and enjoyed the witness of the Spirit with their spirits, that they are the children of God, and have lived and rejoiced and died in the hope of glory. Whosoever thou art, then, who feelest thy need of a Saviour, believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that He has salvation for thee, and thou shalt be saved. Thy faith is the witness of the work of grace in thy soul, if the fruits testify to thy faith. And what shall not faith obtain for thee, O believer? Faith makes Christ yours, and with Himself lays open to you all the treasures of His grace. Whatever His blood hath purchased for His people, faith will obtain. "All things are yours," said Paul to the Corinthian believers, "for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

3rd. We may learn from our text, that the humility which will be satisfied with crumbs does not preclude the desire of better things; yea, that it even implies it. He, who seeks alone the crumbs, has no real desire even for the crumbs. The starving beggar may be humbly gratified for the merest fragments of a feast, yet would not the less desire or rejoice in the repast itself. He who has had a relishing taste of the good things of Christ will hunger and thirst more and more after them. He who is thankful for the smallest privileges will the more eagerly covet greater. He who truly rejoices even in the lowest place in the Kingdom of Heaven will not be indifferent to the highest. The earnest believer, like Paul, forgetting the things that are behind, will press forward to those that are before. They that show their value of small things will most appreciate greater things; and they who are thus humble have the promise that they shall be exalted, because they are not indifferent, but only humble in their

appreciation of themselves; and being willing to be emptied of themselves, they are ready, as empty vessels, to be filled with Christ. The prodigal son would have been content with the place of a servant; but he was not therefore indifferent to the privileges of a son; and his humility led to his exaltation. Had he proudly claimed the place of a son, he would have been rejected. But, humbling himself to seek even a menial's place, he was welcomed as a long-lost, but beloved child. And are not we all as prodigal children, who have rebelled against, and departed from our Heavenly Father, and squandered our patrimony? Do we deserve even the lowest place in the Kingdom of Heaven? No, my friends, we have all need to come like the prodigal, confessing with deep and humble repentance, "Father, we have sinned against Heaven, and before thee. We are not worthy to be called Thy children; receive us but to the lowest place in Thy favor, and it will be infinitely more than our desert."



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SERMON X.

Remember, therefore, how thou hast received.—Rev. III., 3.

IN another lecture we considered the exhortation, “Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain,” induced by the backslidden condition of the Church of Sardis, in which the last embers of the Christian life had almost burned out, and, unless blown again into a flame, would soon be extinguished. The testimony of Him who knew her works is, “For I have not found them perfect before God.” Our text gives us to understand that the condition of this church was at first very different, and that her present state was proportionably sad and blameworthy, owing to the high privileges she had formerly enjoyed, and the early promise of progress, for they to whom much is given, have all the greater responsibility and the more sin, if, after having profited by their privileges for a time, they fall away from them.

The first clause of our text is capable of a two-fold interpretation. It may either mean—remember, therefore, how freely, how liberally thou hast received at the hand of the Lord, how fully thou hast heard the Word of life preached—referring to the abundance of the gifts and privileges which they had enjoyed. Or, it may mean—remember how readily thou hast received, and how willingly and submissively thou hast heard or hearkened to the Word of salvation—referring to the state of mind which they manifested in regard to their privileges, and their appreciation of them. Both views are suitable to the argument of the passage, and both probably express the mind of the Spirit. We shall consider both in succession.

The first simply declares the doctrine that “To whom much is given, of them also shall much be required,”—

that in proportion to our privileges are our responsibilities. And this is a much more solemn consideration than it is generally, we fear, felt to be. Men do not realize sufficiently, that all that they are and have comes from God, is the gift of His Sovereign grace, and that we are stewards of this grace, to use it for His glory. Men act, at least, too much as if they thought that, in their persons, their talents, and their professions, they were responsible only to themselves; that, in using them, they had only to seek their own pleasure, and in abusing them could only be found fault with, if they thus injured others. How often do we hear it said, in palliation of a man's follies or sins, he hurts nobody but himself, as implying that he had the right to do this if he chose. But, even if a man had no responsibility to God, it is a mistake to suppose that a man can either neglect or abuse his gifts, without injury to others. Our example, whether for evil or for good, cannot be without its influence upon our families, our friends, our associates in life; and, as social beings, our conduct exercises in various ways a great influence upon the welfare and happiness of others. By a right use of our powers and opportunities, we may do much good, and, by a neglect or misuse of them, may not only fail to do good, but cause many and great evils. Evil is natural to men; it requires restraining and counteracting influences to prevent its increase, and they, therefore, who are not for Christ, are in this view emphatically against Him; they give free course to evil, and encourage it by acquiescing in it, even if they do not actually countenance it by their example. Even Cain, the murderer, sought to throw the responsibility off himself by saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Even when we do not inflict direct injury by our conduct, we cannot free ourselves from responsibility in our relation to our fellow-men, if injury comes to any by our failing to do our duty to them, any more than if we had willingly and knowingly inflicted it upon them.

The mere cipher in society, therefore, my friends, is not guiltless. The man lives without doing good or exerting

an influence for good upon others, who puts his candle under a bushel, or wraps up his talent in a napkin. More guilty is the man who hoards up gold, useful only in making a good use of it; still more so the sensualist, who consumes it in the gratification of his lusts and passions, and who, in degrading and polluting himself by low vices, pollutes more or less the whole moral atmosphere in which he lives; and, the drunkard, who seeks companionship in his vice, and who thus not only paralyzes his own powers, ruins his worldly interests, and brings misery upon his family, but dragging others along with him in his reckless course, increases the flood of wretchedness which thus overwhelms such multitudes in temporal ruin, and not only so, but destroys his own soul, and leads many along with him to everlasting destruction. It is impossible either to withhold from duty, or to do evil, without the fatal consequences being manifest far beyond ourselves. But, my friends, in all our talents, we are responsible to Him who bestows them, not only that we do not abuse them, but that we use them aright, in such a way that we may glorify Him who bestows them; for God is a jealous God, and His glory He will not give to another. He will not allow men, unpunished, to give their hearts and their service to idols, to the neglect of His service and the dishonor of His name; but He declares, "Him that honoreth me I will honor." Let us seek, my friends, to realize fully our privileges, that we may feel the full responsibility which they lay upon us, that they may not rise against us in condemnation in the great day, but that we approve ourselves faithful stewards of the manifold grace of God. How great are the advantages we enjoy in our social position, in all our intellectual, civil and religious privileges. How thankful should we be to God when we compare our state with that of other nations, where superstition reigns, and cruel despotism shuts out the light of knowledge, to keep its wretched slaves in easy bondage. How grateful should we be that our lot hath been cast in a land of Christian liberty, where each may worship God according to the

dictates of his own conscience, none daring to make him afraid ; and yet more thankful should we be, when we compare our condition with heathen lands, the abodes of ignorance, moral degradation, and horrid cruelty, and think what a blessing we enjoy, not only in the light of knowledge, but in the revelation of the glorious Gospel of the grace of God, and all the purifying, humanizing influences of Christian civilization, the only civilization which can tame and subdue the fierce passions of men, and which, bringing every motive and desire under the regulating power of the love of God, gives an elevation to the moral character, and to the social enjoyments, and a security to the moral condition and to the social rights of men, which form the best blessings to a truly Christian nation.

But not only is our responsibility enhanced by our privileges, but by the manner in which we have improved them, just as the man who has high talents, and has had opportunity to cultivate them, if he fail of his duty in the use of them, is more guilty than he who, having natural talents, has never learnt to cultivate or to use them ; or, as the man who, having obtained a vast store of gold, and knowing how to use it and how to do good with it, is more sinful in the making a bad use of it, than the man who either did not know its value, and left it to lie idle, or, through ignorance of a better way, used it to his own injury and that of others ; so they who, at first, willingly hear or receive the truth, and have, therefore, some apprehension of its value, are the more guilty if they afterwards fall away from the faith or obedience to the Gospel, than those who, never having known its privileges, reject it ; and, therefore, it is said by the Apostle Peter, " For, if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning ; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment, delivered unto them ; for it is

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happened unto them according to the true proverb, 'The dog has turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that had been washed to her wallowing in the mire.'" Alas, how many stony ground hearers are there in the world, who seem to hear the Word with gladness, but have no heartfelt desire for instruction, except so far as they may find the Word justifying their inclinations; no simple purpose of implicit obedience to the will of God revealed, whatever it may require of them; who, when afflictions come upon them, or persecutions assail them, because of the Word, are straightway offended. They have no root in themselves and cannot endure; and, falling away from their profession, it is almost impossible to renew them again to repentance. They persuade themselves that the Gospel has failed them, when it is they who have been unfaithful to themselves; their house has been swept and garnished; they have no principle to fall back upon; they give themselves up in desperation to sin and all evil influences, and the last state of such is unspeakably worse than the first.

See, my friends, that you come to the Word not to find confirmation of your own will, but to know God's will, not only with the desire to hear, but with the purpose to do what is required of you. Remember the profession which you have made, the feelings and the experience which you have expressed, the resolutions you have formed, the vows you have taken upon you, and the promises you have given, and the hopes you have excited, what may be justly expected of you alike on account of your privileges and your profession, and obey the exhortation of our text, to hold fast. This applies, we believe, not only to the impressions and feelings and principles which yet remain, that you may not go farther and sink deeper in the snares of evil, but hold fast to your first privileges, to your first profession, to your first resolutions, or to whatever of good you formerly at any time avowed or practiced, when your impressions were lively and your zeal warm. Seek to re-awaken your first love, to reanimate your first zeal to do your first works. Hold fast to all

that you have heretofore professed or attained to, all the privileges you have enjoyed, all the responsibilities you have incurred ; though you may have let them slip, do not utterly relinquish your hold of them ; seek to redeem them and to recover your lost position.

Alas ! how many are ensnared away by Satan from this, the only course of true wisdom. Seeing their backslidden condition, they despair. After a few feeble efforts against going farther in sin, they give up the struggle, and give way to their inclinations, and fall lower and lower. A sinking mariner, who has caught hold of a rope, will not be satisfied with holding fast, in order to remain where he is ; he will hold fast, that he may draw himself back to the ship, and regain a position of safety. So any one who has truly a hold of Christ by faith will not be satisfied to remain at a distance from Him, amid dangers and discomforts and fears ; he will seek to draw himself closer and closer to Jesus, that he may be under His protection, and enjoy the security and the privileges of those who are near to Him and realize his presence.

But backsliders are exhorted not only to hold fast, but to repent ; for they who do not repent, my friends, will not long hold fast to that which is good. Repentance must be at the foundation of all amendment. The backslider must lament his declension in order to seek to recover his position. He must be sorry for his ingratitude to God, the author of his privileges, and at whose hand he has enjoyed such undeserved favor, and for the injury done to himself for the loss he has sustained, in the neglect or abuse of his opportunities and means of grace, in order to strive to rise again from whence he has fallen. He must have his heart humbled before God, and regret the privileges he has squandered, in order to hold fast in the time to come. But the repentance of too many is mere dread of the consequences, not sorrow for the sin. It is not the loss of privileges that makes them repent, but the incurring of danger, the liability to punishment ; and their repentance is just co-existent and commensurate with

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their fears. When their fears are allayed, their repentance vanishes, and they give free way to their carnal inclinations. This is no true repentance, no repentance towards God; there is no hope of recovery, no salvation in it. After it has passed away the heart returns to its folly and its wickedness, with greater than its former eagerness and recklessness. There must be sorrow for sin, for ingratitude, for the offence against and dishonor done to God, that we may so hold fast to the faith that it will draw us near and keep us near to Christ, will lead us to cultivate that holiness which will evince our love to Him, our desire to be like Him, that we may be with Him. This, my friends, is alone to be attained by faithful persevering watchfulness and prayer to the only Giver of grace, that we may be enabled to remember the high privileges we have enjoyed, the responsibility under which we lie on account of these, and that we may, in repentance for past declensions, hold fast to our profession and to what we have heard and received; for the evil bias which exists in the heart of man, being a constantly operating power, there must be induced a no less constantly operating principle to resist it, and this must be a watchful, persevering use of the means of grace, for the sustaining and growth of the life of God in the soul, and its vigorous exercise in all the thoughts, words and actions of the man. It has been said that nature abhors a vacuum, and so the heart of man will be occupied with evil if not with good, and where evil is admitted, it must be by the expulsion to an equivalent degree of good, or where good is cultivated, it finds place alone by the suppression or banishment of evil. God and mammon cannot dwell together in harmony in the same heart. Where the one advances the other must retire. Where the one is paramount, the other must be prostrate. A man must either hate the one and love the other, or cleave to the one and despise the other. Yet, how common is the vain attempt to reconcile the service of both; but, they who make the attempt, if they deceive themselves, cannot deceive God. They may fancy that

they are obeying God by rendering to Him the service of the lips, or of a form of godliness, while their hearts are given to the world and the flesh. But God, my friends, judgeth not as man judgeth, according to the outward appearance,—He judgeth the heart.

We are lastly told, as we are now to consider, what are the consequences of not watching and holding fast and repenting. "If, therefore, thou shalt not watch I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I shall come upon thee." There is security in watching, and along with security there is peace, for Christ will keep His own, by His almighty power, through faith unto salvation; none shall pluck them out of His hand. The life is hid with God in Christ, and when He who is their life shall appear they also shall appear with Him in glory; but, without watchfulness, there is no security, no peace, for in a day or in an hour that they think not of, Christ may call them into judgment.

It should, my friends, be a solemn consideration to us, and an earnest call to instant, constant duty, that we know not what a day nor an hour may bring forth, that any moment may terminate our day of grace and seal our doom for ever. But how little are men impressed by the consideration, frequently as it is exemplified. Men dwell too exclusively upon what is hopeful in their experience of the world, and too little on the reverse. They behold those who have prospered in their worldly course, and attained to a good old age, and they hope and trust it may be so with them. The young overlook the multitudes whom in youth the scythe of Time mows down around them, and buoy up their hopes by looking forward to enter the career with those who are striving and contending for the mastery, on the busy arena of life. The middle-aged look still before them to the aged, who have pursued their course with success, and in old age are reaping the fruit of their industry. They forget the multitudes who are struck down around them with their harness on, amid the energies and activities of life—many without a moment for

reflection upon their past course, or future prospects. Even the aged look to some older than themselves, who are yet weathering the storms of life, to cheer them with the hope of a yet long evening of their day of grace. All are too ready to turn away their eyes from examples that would call them to a painful survey of their actual position in regard to God and eternal things, that would lay a restraint upon present pursuits, interests, pleasures or indulgences, which would cloud their dreams of worldly glory or enjoyment, and call them to present duty and present action in a life, the prospects and enjoyments of which are of faith, not of sight; for even the present enjoyments of the Christian are all in connection with the anticipation of the future. He is but a pilgrim and a sojourner upon earth. He is travelling towards the home of his desires and affections, and though his comforts by the way are not indifferent to him, his greatest comforts are those which give the greatest assurance of progress towards and security in his ultimate object, the rest that remaineth for the people of God. His great object will be to make his calling and election sure, to manifest the fruits of the Spirit, as an evidence that he has given himself to Christ, and that Christ is dwelling in him; and that, in being gradually transformed into His image, he is preparing for His Kingdom, that whatever the Lord, in His Providence, hath prepared for Him, he is ready; that to him to live is Christ and to die were gain. Yet, how many put off the, evil day, and procrastinate in taking the resolution to give up the world in all its idolatrous and enslaving influences, which would ruin their souls, and to give themselves to Christ, in whom alone they have eternal life. How many does death steal upon as a thief, and terminate all their delusive visions, their false hopes, amid gloomy despair, and the awful forebodings of wrath treasured up against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Death is relentless, and as the tree falleth so must it lie. There is no repentance, no working in the grave. They that have

done good shall arise to the resurrection of the just, they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.

What an awful condition, my friends, to see the day of grace closed, and eternity unprepared for, the heart unreconciled to God, and exposed to the unavoidable, and irrevocable doom of the wicked! But how blessed the condition of the godly, who have made their peace with God, through the peace-speaking blood of the Lamb, who go up through the wilderness, walking by faith and not by sight, looking to and leaning upon the arm of their beloved, "Whom having not seen they love, in whom, though now they see Him not, yet, believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!" Such shrink not from the perils of the way, nor from the struggles of the conflict; they shun no duty which the Lord requires of them, no suffering by which they may glorify Him, or have the graces of the Christian life, in them perfected, but who yet would rather be absent from the body that they might be present with the Lord, in the full enjoyment of those things such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, which the Lord hath prepared for them that love Him. Such rise above the world; while they enjoy its blessings they are not enslaved by them or seduced from Christ; while they feel its afflictions, they yet rejoice more in the hope of the glory to come.

I cannot, my friends, refrain from taking this opportunity of directing your attention, as an example of faith and godliness, to one pre-eminent alike for his gifts and graces in the ministry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who has been, by a sad and sudden blow, taken from our midst and left a bereaved congregation and a sorrowing church to lament his loss. I refer to the late Dr. Bayne, of Knox's Church, Galt. With talents which fall to the lot of few, which would have enabled him to attain high distinction in any walk of life, he consecrated himself with simple earnestness to the ministry of the Gospel and the care of souls, choosing a path of substan-

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tial usefulness rather than one of worldly ambition ; and he perseveringly cultivated, amid alluring calls to other departments in the church's work, a sphere of labor less calculated to display his gifts to the world, than to afford him a wide, but unostentatious field of usefulness. A very Knox in his fearlessness of man, and his unflinchingness in principle, many did not discern the tenderness of his heart. With a scorn of whatever was mean or base, he had such generosity of feeling and tenderness of the infirmities of the good, that while he lashed the vices and follies of the world, and sought to bring down the vanity of the conceited, he never willingly hurt the feelings of another, whom there was ground to respect. A man of deep thought and of extensive learning, there was much originality in his conceptions, and with a clear and logical mind and highly cultivated powers, his opinions were never formed without justifiable and comprehensive grounds for their adoption, and his views seldom failed to carry conviction to the minds of others. He was mighty in the Scriptures. With him philosophy and science were ever made the handmaids of the Word of God. As an analyzer and expounder of Scripture, he had few equals, and scarcely any excelled him. As a preacher, he had a searching insight into human character, which gave a pointedness and pungency to his remarks, and to his applications of Scripture, which told upon the consciences of multitudes, exposed their sins and swept away their delusions, and set powerfully before them, with all the earnestness of an appeal from one who had found his own safety there—Jesus, as the refuge of sinners. As a man and a pastor, he ever showed the stern principle, the noble self-sacrifice, the unspotted purity, the humble piety, and all the milder graces of the Christian character, which were calculated to secure for him respect and admiration, and give weight to his ministry. He died, as we believe he would have wished to do, in harness. Prepared to go forth to preach to a neighbouring congregation, on their day of preparation for a Communion Sabbath, he was

seized with sudden illness. After a short period of violent suffering, the pain was subdued ; but he never rallied. He passed away, when supposed to have been asleep, with none to witness his departure, but, apparently, without a struggle, to enter, as we believe, into the joy of his Lord, and the reward of his labors.

Let us watch and pray, my friends, that our latter end, however sudden our call may be, may find us prepared. What encouragements have we to seek the Lord, while He may be found. We are sinners, but there is pardon in Christ for all who believe in Him. We are needy and helpless of ourselves, but in Christ there is fulness of grace. And what a glorious portion awaits the people of God—life which shall never end, amid a blessedness and glory which shall never fade—for it is the enjoyment of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, with whom is all fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for ever more. It is a free Gospel that is preached to us, a free salvation and free grace that is offered to our acceptance. Only ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and all the privileges of the Gospel are yours. "Watch and pray, therefore, that ye enter not into temptation," but "hold fast and repent," that the Lord may not come on you unprepared, but that, mindful of your high privileges, with your oil purchased and your lamps trimmed, you may be waiting the coming of the bridegroom, and with Him enter into the marriage feast.



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SERMON XI.

"These are in the world." "They are not of the world."
—John xvii., 11 and 16.

THESE words indicate—1st. the position; 2nd. the character of the disciples of Christ, during the present life. As men, their position in the world is like that of all other men. There is nothing in the calling of Christians, which either changes their condition as men, or relieves them from any of the exigencies, or any of the evils to which men are by nature subjected in the world. They have the same wants to supply, the same infirmities to suffer, the same natural obligations to discharge. They are moved by the same natural impulses and affections. The object of Christianity is not to call them out of the world; not to make them, in disgust with life, seek to cast off their burden, either by putting an end to their existence, or by withdrawing themselves from the intercourse and the pursuits of life, and giving themselves up either to monastic solitude, or the exclusive exercise of religious meditation and acts of worship. Our Lord did not, could not, pray to the Father in behalf of His disciples, that He should either actually take them out of the world, great as the trials and sufferings and sorrows which He knew they should endure in the world might be, or withdraw them from its activities. He knew that during their appointed time on earth, their sphere of duty was in the world, and their sphere of privileges too, and that it would neither be for God's glory, nor for their good, nor for the salvation of souls, that they should be relieved of the burden which it was appointed them to bear. Like their Master—though they might be straitened till it should be accomplished—they had a work to do in the world, which might not be left undone, consistently with the fulfilment of the

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purposes of God. God hath chosen His own out of the world—that is, out from among men, not to transfer them to another sphere, or to separate them wholly from the society, the pursuits, or the natural duties and obligations of other men, but to serve Him in the world, so to use and improve the circumstances of their condition here, as to make these conduce to His glory, and to their preparation for His Heavenly Kingdom. Though in the world, therefore, they are not of the world,—they are distinguished from mere men of the world by their motives, their objects, and, consequently, by their character in life. They are not only distinct and distinguishable from such, but, in many particulars, and diametrically opposed to them.

Let us, for a little, contemplate the Christian in some of those things, in which he differs from others, and in regard to which he is, though in the world, not of the world. All the objects and ends of the worldly man begin, centre in, and are bounded by the world. For this he lives, and to this he devotes himself; or, at least, if he has any thoughts beyond the short and uncertain futurity of life, they are so vague and feeble that the world is ever predominant, and keeps all else in abeyance. But the Christian will ever bear in mind that the world is but a temporary scene, that life is but a pilgrimage, a passage; that here is not his rest or his portion; that death is not an annihilation, but only a change of his being; that an eternity of existence shall then open upon him, and that the character of that eternity shall be to him determined by the character of his life on earth; that he who here sows to the flesh—that is, seeks alone carnal and worldly objects—shall of the flesh reap corruption,—that all that he coveted shall be buried with him, and amid the corruption of the tomb shall perish with his corruptible nature; while he, who sows to the Spirit,—he who seeks spiritual and eternal things, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, the fruit of that which he has sown. He looks upon this world, therefore, as a seed time, a time of needful labour and

preparation, and he looks for the harvest not in the world, but at the end of the world. Or, he regards this life as a pilgrimage, a passage, a journey, in which he is hastening on with the great predominant object of reaching the place of his destination.

The worldly man is like the inhabitant of a country, pursuing his occupations or his pleasures, content to dwell within its bounds, and having all his interests and affections centred in it or limited to it. But the Christian is seeking a better country, that is an heavenly. He does not allow himself to be occupied or engrossed by the interests or the pleasures which he may find by the way. His object is to complete his journey with success and safety, and all that he does has a primary reference to this object. True, he seeks his comfort and convenience by the way, but not to the hindering of his great object. Nay, he will sacrifice all in this respect, to make it more safe and more sure.

The Christian, whose affections are set upon things above, not on things on the earth, is like the traveller journeying to his home, where are his interests and all the objects of his endearment; and he is thus as a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth. Heaven is his longed-for rest, and he is chiefly concerned that he may arrive there at last, in the full enjoyment of every blessing and every privilege which it can afford. To this his desires and his labours all tend.

Is this the case with you, my friends? Are you living and walking, not by sight, but by the faith of things to come; not occupied and engrossed with what has a reference to this world only or chiefly, but, in all that you do or seek after, asking yourselves—"what bearing has this upon the interests of my soul, upon my prospects for eternity? Is it a treasure for earth only, or is it a treasure for Heaven? Am I laboring alone for the world that now is, or for the eternity that is to come?" Are you frequently asking yourselves, my friends, in regard to your thoughts, your desires, your purposes, your actions,

whether Heaven enters into and mixes with and prompts them; or whether they are limited to earth? Alas! we fear, with multitudes who profess to be Christians, that Heaven has but a small share of these. And with all, even the most heavenly-minded, there is much need for heart-searching and watchful circumspection, lest our carnal and deceitful hearts seduce us from the great interest of life, dazzle and mislead us by the delusive allurements, or entangle us amid the interests and cares of this world, so as to interrupt or hinder the simplicity and the ardour of our pursuit of the one thing needful, and thus greatly to disturb our peace and mar our privileges, by endangering our hope.

Let us remember that, whatever objects, whatever ends we may be called upon to seek, and to strive after in the world, there is one thing pre-eminently and essentially needful, and every other end or object just measures its importance by its efficiency in promoting and advancing this—"For what will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

But, again, the Christian is distinguished from the worldly man by his motives of action. His own will and his worldly purposes regulate the conduct of the one; the will of God, revealed for his salvation, regulates that of the other. The one loves and serves the world; the other loves and serves the Redeemer. The one seeks only how he may please himself; the other how he may please and honor Christ. The one asks—Is this safe and expedient, and will this forward my object? With the other the question is—Is this not only lawful, but is it calculated to promote the Redeemer's glory and my own salvation? The worldly man is indifferent to the motive, so that the action be not criminal, exposing him to the judgment of laws of his country, or to the censure of men. The Christian is deeply concerned about the motives from which he acts; about fulfilling the commandment, not according to the letter merely, but according to the Spirit; that he be not only acquitted in regard to his conduct by the laws

of men, and by the opinion of the world, but by his own conscience, and by God, who seeth the heart. Are you conscious, my friends, of being thus distinguished from the world, while in it, not of it ; of the love of God reigning in your hearts and animating your conduct as your great ruling motive in all that you seek after, and all that you do ? Be assured that if you are really Christ's people, this will be the case. He asks every one who professes to be His, as He did Peter of old—" Lovest thou me ?" And how shall the love of Christ be in us, if it constrain us not to obey Him, and to please Him, and ever to deny ourselves and take up our cross that we may follow Him ? As they who love God will love what He loves, and hate what He hates, so the Christian will hate sin as displeasing to God and dishonoring to Him, and will love holiness, as that which is acceptable in His sight and tending to His glory. The worldly man regards sin lightly. If he can escape the evils of sin in the world ; if he can avoid the detection of his sin and the reproach of men ; if he can blind or quiet his conscience in regard to his guilt, he cares little about the offence against God. But, with the Christian, who sees sin as the abominable thing which the Lord hateth, the offence of his sin is the great source of his grief and shame on account of it. The worldly man, if he can but maintain his reputation and attain his objects, has no love of holiness. He may desire to be saved in his sins, but he has no desire to be delivered from his sins, which he loves. He would rather continue in sin if he might, and if he dared. But the Christian's great desire is to be delivered alike from the condemnation, and from the power of sin, that he may be conformed to the mind of Christ. His apprehension of the doctrine of the cross has made sin an awful and a hateful thing to him, and all that is glorious and attractive, all that is truly blessed, is connected and associated in his mind with holiness, because God, whom he loves, is holy ; because the most endearing manifestation of His love to men affords at the same time the most remarkable exhibi-

tion of his inviolable holiness, and, because, "without holiness, no man shall see God." Hatred of sin, therefore, and desires after holiness become most influential motives of conduct in the people of Christ. The commission of sin, whether by transgression of the law, or neglect of duty, whether by doing what he ought not, or omitting what he ought to do, fills the believer with shame and alarm, and humbles him in repentance, in that he hath thus crucified the Saviour afresh, and put him to shame; and the desire of being like Christ, of adorning His doctrine, and of being prepared for the enjoyment of His presence, is the most powerful stimulus and the sweetest encouragement to duty which the Christian can experience.

Is it thus, my friends, with you? Do you tremble at the very thought of sin, as an offence against God, and as dishonoring to your Redeemer? Does every sin, every neglect pierce your soul with sorrow, and lead you in repentance to more anxious and unceasing watchfulness against sin, greater jealousy of yourselves, and more earnest desires after serving the Lord in holiness? If so, though in the world you are not of it.

Oh, that those, who profess to be the disciples of Jesus, would examine themselves more carefully in regard to this matter, and seek unequivocal evidence, to which side they belong, whether they are the world's or Christ's, for their own assurance, as well as to give a more manifest and decided testimony for Christ, by their devotedness in His service, by their being not only not against Christ, but for Him. For he that is not living in the desire and endeavor after not partial, but entire holiness, after not the name or the form, but the power of godliness, has no evidence of his having an interest in Christ, or in the calling of His people, whom He hath called with a holy calling to "an inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away," reserved in Heaven for them who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and with whom the unceasing and para-

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mount object of their concern will be to make their calling and election sure.

Again, the Christian is distinguished from the world in his pursuits,—yet not so much in regard to their nature as to the manner with which and the spirit with which he engages in them. It is true that the Christian will deem many things unlawful, and many inexpedient and unbecoming, in regard to which the worldly man will not scruple, but the Christian has, nevertheless, many objects in common with the man of the world. It is a law to which all men are subject, that they must live by their labor. All men must make provision for the support and temporal well-being of themselves and their families; and this is no less a Christian than a natural obligation. Paul says:—"If any man work not neither should he eat." Every one should have a lawful calling and labour in it with all needful diligence. There is no plea given by the need of seeking spiritual and eternal things, to be slothful in business. We are required to make provision for our own house, under the solemn denunciation that he who fails to do so "hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." We are required to provide things honest in the sight of all men, and that we may have to give to him that needeth. Our Christian calling neither relieves us from the necessity, nor excuses us from the obligation of working for our own support and comfort, and that of those connected with us. But the worldly man and the Christian, while engaged in the same calling, fulfilling the same natural obligations, showing the same energy and diligence, may yet be actuated by very different principles and motives. Two may be in their respective counting-houses; two on their respective farms; two in their respective workshops; two may be labouring together in the same calling—both upright and honourable in their dealings and transactions, both sober and industrious, both enjoying the confidence of their fellow-men; and yet the one may be a Christian, while the other is a mere worldling; the former, while showing the same energy

and diligence in his calling, may be diametrically opposed to him in the whole principles and motives. The one may have no concern beyond the worldly gain and the worldly objects to which he would make it minister, whether these may be of a more degrading or of a more noble character; the other seeks, as the steward of God's grace to improve his talents and his opportunities to the utmost, for His glory; and that he may fill with all fidelity the sphere of Christian duty and usefulness which is set before him. He is not set upon the wealth; so much as upon the use which he may make of it for Christ. His affections are not entangled by the riches or the comforts of time; his heart is in Heaven, where his treasure has been laid up. All the wealth of the world would not keep his soul away from Christ and his everlasting portion, but he seeks to be approved by his Master in his stewardship, and that with the treasures of this world he may purchase the true riches.

There will be great distinctions found existing between such persons. The one will make business paramount, and, where the duties or objects of religion interfere, the latter will be sacrificed, human means and instrumentalities will be trusted in rather than the blessing of God, which is promised in connection with the path of duty. With the other, the Kingdom of Heaven will be the first object, and in the path of duty he will trust to find all in connection with worldly interests, which it is the will of God to grant to him; and he will desire no more. His religious interests will not be sacrificed to the gains of the world, for he seeks these only that he may honor God with them. This creates another distinction, in this respect, between the worldly man and the Christian. The latter will not be overwhelmed by worldly losses and disappointments, because his heart is not set upon these for their own sakes; he has other treasures, and another portion which the world knows not of, to which he can look; yea, though hungering and thirsting in the flesh, his soul is satisfied with the bread and water

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of life ; though naked, as to his body, he has the wedding garment, in which he can appear before God ; though houseless and homeless, he has a house of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ; though friendless here, Christ is not ashamed to call him brother ; though portionless on earth, he is become an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ of the Kingdom of Heaven. On the other hand, the worldly man, when deprived of his earthly possessions, friends, and dependencies, and his hope of worldly prosperity and happiness, has nothing left on which to lean ; the instrumentalities of human devising failing him, he has no resource but despair. The Christian may indeed regret the loss of his comforts and his greater means of usefulness, but he will see the hand of God in this, and submit, and his submission will hinder undue grief. He will remember the responsibilities and temptations, and dangers which accompany a great trust in regard to the possession of worldly goods, and will be intent on employing and improving faithfully, to his Lord's glory, that which is committed to him ; and the lustre of the Christian character may be equally displayed in apportioning the pittance of worldly penury, and saving the mite from the calls of stern necessity for the Lord's service, as in using, with unselfish fidelity, the ample resources of worldly wealth, to His glory.

How pleasing, my friends, though alas ! too rare, to see the principles, and the affections, and the motives of the Christian, holding their place untarnished amid the prosperity of the world, to behold the successful labors of life freely and heartily devoted to the cause of Christ, and of souls ; and the prosperous man, whatever the source of his prosperity, whatever his station and condition in society, rising alike above the engrossing selfishness, the slavish anxieties, and the greedy rapaciousness of the world, and feeling it to be his pleasure, no less than his duty, to spend and to be spent for Christ, not making himself the miserable slave of his calling, that he may

minister to his lusts, or to the world only, but making his calling his servant, that thereby he may serve Christ.

Further, the Christian is distinguished from the worldly man in his pleasures; and not only as in the former case does this distinction hold in regard to his hatred and shunning of all low, degrading, vicious pleasures, all those which at once and distinctly draw the line of demarcation between the ungodly and the godly, but also in regard to those which may be regarded as harmless, or, in a measure, be sanctioned by the practice and habits, or by the silent acquiescence of the professing Christian world.

The enjoyments of society, the pleasures of literature, of science, of taste, the elegancies and refinements of life, are by no means forbidden to the Christian. We are by no means to picture the man of God as ever clothed in sack-cloth, with ashes upon his head, as the flesh-mortifying stoic, as the morose ascetic, or the secluded monk. No, the Christian has his sphere in the world, and has, like his master, his great pattern and example, the sympathies and the affections of a man, yet is he not of the world, and just in this that he makes all subservient to the objects of his Christian calling. He has no taste for pleasures, by which he cannot adorn this. The treasures of literature and science are made to bear upon it, and aid the cause,—to illustrate, enforce, and recommend the truth of God.

Intercourse with the world without is used as an opportunity to make his light shine forth, and to exhibit the power of the Gospel; and the society of friends, is used to cultivate and strengthen, by the interchange of Christian converse and experience, the graces of the Christian character. No less lovely is the Christian faithfulness, which is displayed in the use of the world, and amid the temptations which the prosperity and the flatteries of the world present, than the christian steadfastness which is manifested in the endurance of trials and afflictions for Christ's sake. Not only the kind, but the character,

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of the Christian's pleasures in the world will be inspired and transfused by his Christianity; and not only will the amusements and pleasures of the mere worldly man be distasteful to the Christian, but even those which, in name, are common to him with the men of the world, will be ennobled and distinguished by the religious bearing and tendency infused into them, by which it will be shown that they who practise them, while in the world, are not of the world,—that their rejoicing is in the Lord,—that their peace and joy is in believing,—and that in the world their chief delight is in contemplating and following Him who is their beloved, all their salvation, and all their desire,—who feel that wherever they can be with Christ, and can look for His approval, there they can be happy, that where Christ is not, where the view of Him is shut out by the world, and His sensible presence with the soul interrupted, there they can find no pleasure.

Oh! that you might all, my friends, experience this. You would not then long after the forbidden or the doubtful pleasures of the world. Your souls would be attracted by far higher and purer enjoyments, and you would feel, in the intercourse of life, the satisfaction of alluring and drawing others upwards in the scale of happiness, and not the humiliation of sinking to meet them on their own level.

Still further, the Christian is distinguished from the worldly, in his trials and afflictions; for those that most affect the man of the world, are not those that most distress him. True, he has a part in all the ills that flesh is heir to, and hard is it often, with all his Christian faith and fortitude, to bear them. Poverty may pinch him, and may cause many a pang to him, not only from his own sufferings, but yet more in beholding the sufferings of those near and dear to him, which he cannot alleviate; sickness may prostrate him, and bring along with it many and sore trials; pain may excruciate him; the loss of friends, or the reproach of the world may grieve and discourage him; bereavements may leave him desolate and deserted;

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but in all these circumstances he has a support which the worldly man has not, for he has hope in God; he beholds His hand in them all; he knows the comfort of being able to say "it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth to him good,"—in the confidence of faith, that all shall be overruled for good to believers, yea, even work out a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. How miserable are the refuges to which the worldly resort for comfort, amid their trials and afflictions,—“broken cisterns that hold no water.” They labor on amid the disappointments of time, still indulging hope in the world, till hope itself fails them, and leaves them to despair; or they strive to dispel the sense of their afflictions and their griefs, by driving away the thought of them, by seeking the distractions of business, the excitement of society, by launching on the stream of worldly amusement, or even by plunging into the vortex of excess, or seeking to annihilate or terminate the sense of present evils, by rushing recklessly into eternity, and against the judgment of God revealed. How different the afflictions of the Christian, softened under the influence of that peace of God which the world cannot give, but which it cannot take away. Behold this exemplified in the Apostle Paul,—“we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed,” “for our light affliction,” saith he, “which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Lastly.—The Christian differs in his hopes and in his fears from the worldling. The latter has hope alone for this world, and most dreads worldly evils, and, as the greatest of these, he dreads death, through fear of which he is, as the Bible and experience alike testify, all his life-time subject to bondage; for while he has no hopes, no desires, beyond the world, he has many fears, many disquieting

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forebodings in regard to the future. But the Christian has his hope and his portion beyond death and the grave; and he fears worldly hopes and evils but lightly, compared with the danger of losing his soul and his heavenly inheritance. This is the great object of his anxiety, and on this ground he fears sin, and he fears wandering from the path of duty, and he fears leaning upon himself and losing hold of Christ. He can rejoice in worldly calamities and sufferings and sorrows if they bring him nearer to Christ, and give him a sweeter sense of His presence, a more assured resting by faith on Him; but he fears his own evil nature, he fears the power of sin, he fears the snares of the world, he fears Satan and the powers of darkness. He does not fear death, for he believes it is robbed of its sting; he does not fear the grave, for he trusts it is deprived of its victory; he does not fear the condemnation of sin, for he knows that this is removed from the believer; he does not dread a judgment to come, for he covers himself with the righteousness of Christ; he does not fear God, for he can look to Him as his reconciled, his Heavenly Father; he does not fear eternity, for he feels that there is his rest, his portion of blessedness; but he fears being out of Christ; he fears any uncertainty about his calling and election; he fears in any way falling short of his privileges. He does not fear that the promise of God shall not be fulfilled, he does not doubt the sufficiency of Christ; but he fears himself; he does not doubt the security of the believer's hope and portion in Christ; but he passes the time of his sojourning here, in the fear of offending or dishonoring his God and Saviour, of not fulfilling his obligations, and improving his talents to the glory of God.

Are you in these things, my friends, distinguished from the world, and though in it, not of it, “not conformed to it, but transformed by the renewing of your minds.” If so, blessed are ye; ye have overcome the world. Only persevere and be steadfast to the end, and your labor shall not be in vain; for if ye be in Christ, then are all

things yours ; the world is yours, in its highest privileges ; and Heaven is yours. "Ye are children of God, and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." You will be enabled to say—"To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,"—and that while you submit to the will, and wait the purpose of God, in the faithful seeking of Christian duty, you have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.



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SERMON XII.

"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of God. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them."—Mark x, 14, 61.



ADDRESS myself, on this occasion, particularly to the Sabbath school children and the younger portion of the congregation, and I hope, as I shall endeavour to express myself simply and shortly, that you will give me your undivided attention.

A beautiful view, my young friends, is given in our text of the character of Jesus, so kind and so condescending. Some parents, we are informed, who probably had seen the miracles, and heard the preaching, and witnessed the good works of Jesus, and regarded Him as some excellent person—perhaps, as the Messiah, who, it had been foretold by the prophets, should come and redeem His people, brought their children to Him, that He might lay His hands on them and bless them. It was very natural for parents who loved and were concerned about their children to seek a blessing for them. Some parents, alas! would not take much trouble for their children, and some, who are very anxious about their advancement in the world, care very little about obtaining for them the blessing of the Lord; and children should be very thankful who have parents who will pray for the blessing of God upon them. Parents who bring their children to Jesus, in the ordinance of baptism, not as a mere form, but in singleness of heart and simplicity of faith, express their desire that their little ones may obtain a blessing from Him. Though the mere circumstance of your having been baptized will not save you, or make you any better, or do you any good of itself, the Lord

will bless the faith, and the believing endeavors, and prayers of Christian parents. And we consider that young persons enjoy a great privilege who have had pious parents, who have thus sought to bring them to Jesus; and they should feel it to be no less their privilege than their duty to follow out the purpose of their parents, by seeking of themselves to come to Him, and to receive a blessing from Him.

We are told that, when the parents alluded to in our text brought their children to Jesus, His disciples rebuked them, and told them to take them away, because they thought that their Master should not be troubled with little children. But in this they were greatly mistaken. Jesus is called the good shepherd and a good shepherd loves the lambs of his flock, and loves to have them near him, and make them fond of him, and takes great care of them, and deals very tenderly with them. Just so Jesus, my young friends, loves little children; and we are told that He was much displeased with His disciples for their conduct, and uttered the precious words of our text, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." Children are very often afraid to go to strangers, especially if they are aged, or learned, or wise, or great persons, for many such are apt rather to be annoyed with children, and to think them, from their youth and ignorance, beneath their regard. But when such do take notice of young persons, and manifest an interest in them, those, who feel rightly, think it very kind, and are greatly pleased with their kindness. And was it not infinitely more gracious and condescending in Jesus to take notice of such little children, and to take them up in His arms and caress them, as He did, and give them His blessing? For though, in His earthly condition, He was a poor man, the son of a carpenter, yet was He unspeakably wiser and richer and greater than any man that ever lived on earth, however great his

learning or his wealth or his dignity might be ; for He is God, and knows all things, and He is the Lord of Heaven and of earth, and all things are His.

And now, my young friends, I will tell you some of the reasons which make Jesus so anxious for young persons, even very little children, to come to Him.

1st. Because children have souls to be saved as well as others, and He came into the world to save sinners. You may hear some persons say that little children have not sinful hearts by nature ; that sin does not come with them into the world, but grows out of the temptations to which they are exposed in the world. But do not believe them, my dear young friends, for no error can be more dangerous. The Word of God tells us otherwise. David says :—" I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." And again he saith of the wicked : " They are estranged from the womb ; they go astray as soon as they are born." Your own hearts, my young friends, I am sure, if you give heed to them, often tell you that they are naturally inclined to that which is evil, and averse to that which is good ; and you are old enough, I think, to perceive the contradiction which is implied in the statement of those who say that children have not originally evil hearts, but that they become evil through the temptations to evil which the world presents ; for what is it but the corruption of the heart which brings it so fatally under the power of temptation, which makes it shun the good and follow the evil ? It was just because Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and because He knew that little children, as well as older persons, were sinners, and as such, under the curse of God's law, and the sentence of death, and exposed to the wrath of God, and the fires of Hell, that He was so anxious that they should come to Him and be saved.

Oh, my young friends, sin is a dreadful thing ; it is an awful offence in a creature against a holy God, and Jesus knows how God hates sin ; how it is impossible for Him to look upon iniquity with any toleration, and how, though

He pities sinners, He cannot but inflict the whole penalty of the law against those transgressors who will not repent of their sins and come unto Him, through faith, by that new and living way which He has graciously opened up for their return in the Lord Jesus Christ, who came as a man into the world, to suffer and to die on the cross for the sins of His people, that He might make atonement for their offences and reconcile them to God by His blood; and how greatly aggravated must be the condemnation of those who have not only transgressed the law, but ungratefully rejected the grace of God and the Redeemer.

What an evidence has Jesus given us in what He hath done, endured and suffered, of His love for souls, and His concern about their salvation. He would not have the soul of one little one to perish. And should not you be very thankful to Him, that He has given you this assurance, and that He has so kindly and so expressly invited little children to come to Him, that they may be saved?

2nd. Another reason for His so particularly encouraging the young to come to Him, is because He knows the ensnaring and hardening influence of sin and of the world on the carnal heart, and He wishes all little ones to turn from sin in repentance, and to come to Him that they may be made children of God, before their consciences become seared, and their hearts, enslaved by the flesh, and the world, and the Devil. For though, as we have told you, my young friends, the principle of evil comes into the world with us, and is in our hearts by nature, it is not matured in the young, as it is in those who have for many years yielded to its power, and become accustomed to its indulgence. Sin is like a little seed in the heart of a child; but, if encouraged by love of the world and disregard of God, it grows fast with advancing age and spreads its roots till it gets such a hold, that it cannot be plucked out. Or, like a little leaven in flour, it soon spreads its influence over the whole heart. And, therefore, it is that Jesus is so anxious that little

children should come to Him before their hearts are hardened by the world and sin. Is it not very kind and considerate of Him; and should not you be very ready to acknowledge His kindness, to take His warning, and to accept of His offers while they are made to you?

3rd. But, my friends, a third reason why Jesus wishes little children to come to Him, is to make them happy. Young persons, through their natural inclination to sin, and aversion to God and the things of God, are very apt to think of religion as something very repulsive, and gloomy, and disagreeable; and to think of coming to Jesus as something which they would rather not do, but which they are told they must do in order to be saved. But God would not ask you to give up your sins and your worldly pleasures, were they not alike dishonouring to Him, and injurious to yourselves, and had He not something infinitely better to offer you. The Bible tells us that there is no peace to the wicked, however great or prosperous they might be in the world; an evil conscience keeps them ever uneasy, in fear of God's displeasure, in fear of death and of a judgment to come; for God will judge the wicked, and "the wages of sin is death."

You have, my young friends, I dare say, experienced, when seeking your sinful pleasures against the warnings and in disobedience to the commands of your parents and friends, that even in the height of your enjoyment, there was a weight upon your consciences which made you feel uncomfortable and unhappy, even though you might try to persuade yourselves that your parents or friends were unduly strict or severe with you, and though you might try to justify your conduct to yourselves, still there was an inward feeling that you were doing wrong, which destroyed your peace. So it is with sins against your Father in Heaven. You may try to drive them from your thoughts; but there are times when they will return like phantoms of the night, to disturb your souls. Or you may seek to drown them in pleasure and mirth and revelry, but they will

often appear like the handwriting on the wall at the feast of Belteshazzar, to fill you with terror and dismay, even in the midst of your gaiety. But, on the other hand, my young friends, you have doubtless felt also the satisfaction of having repented of and confessed your faults, of having made a clear conscience, of having obtained pardon, and having returned to your duty. So it is with the returning sinner, under the assurance of God's forgiveness, in the enjoyment of "that peace of God which passeth understanding, which the world cannot give and cannot take away." Having once truly known the blessed fruits of holiness and obedience, the repentant sinner will not return to his sins. The prodigal son would never again long for his guilty pleasures, after he had been brought back by repentance to experience the sweetness of his father's love, and the joys of his father's house. It becomes the believers' meat and drink to do the will of God.

4th. Again, the last reason which we shall mention why Jesus wishes little children to come to Him, is that which He gives in our text, because "of such is the Kingdom of God." Not, as we have told you, because they are holy and fit for Heaven—for all are sinners and need to be saved—but because, as little children, they possess some of the qualifications which will prepare them for accepting and enjoying His offered salvation—for the words, "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," just mean that such is the character of those who will most readily listen to and obey the dispensation of grace in the Gospel. It is a general character of little children to be humble and teachable, ready to receive instruction,—and such must be the disciple of Jesus. He must confess himself a sinner and seek pardon alone of the free grace of God; he must lay aside the wisdom of the world and be willing to be taught and directed by the word and Spirit of God.

Little children are generally shocked by open and flagrant sin, and have a tender conscience—so must it be with the child of God. It is another character of little

children to be submissive and obedient to their parents—so the first virtue which the child of God must learn is implicit obedience to His Fatherly will. Little children are of a confiding, trustful character—and faith is the great directing principle of the life of God in the soul of the believer. Lastly,—little children are simple in their motives, warm in their affections, and ardent in their purposes—so should the children of God be. And Jesus is anxious to enlist all these principles at once, and wholly in the service of God,—the humility and teachableness, the tender conscience, the submissive, obedient spirit, the ready faith and the warm affections and ardent temperament in the forming and perfecting of the Christian character, while these are not yet engaged in the service or devoted to the objects of the world.

The reasons, my young friends, why Jesus wishes you to come to Him, are just the very reasons which should induce you to go to Him. You have souls to be saved, and He is both able and willing to save you. He wishes you to come at once, while you may, and while it is most easy for you to come, before sin and the world harden and enslave your hearts, and before the day of grace closes and seals your doom forever. He wishes you to come that you may be happy; and what can you desire more than happiness, and who can make you so happy as Jesus? And He wishes you to come while your natural dispositions as children may the more readily be converted into the graces of the Christian character,—while your humility may incline you to receive the Gospel of Jesus as He is offered there; while your tender consciences may be more easily awakened to convictions of sin and guilt; while your obedience will be more readily rendered to God; while your hearts are more unsuspecting, and your faith will be more freely given to His promises, and your affections fixed upon Himself, while they are yet impressible and warm.

Having told you, my young friends, some of the reasons why Jesus wishes you to come to Him, and also

shown you that the same reasons should incline you to go to Him, I will now say a few words about how you must go to Christ.

1st. You must go in faith ; you must be content to receive and believe many things, just because God hath said so in His Word, and because the people of God have realized them in their experience. Your corrupt and carnal hearts are readily deceived by the lusts of the flesh, by the pleasures of sin, and by the allurements of the world. The pursuit of these things affords much present gratification and many powerful attractions, and many flattering prospects to the unrenewed heart. As the poison that is sipped with the honey is not at first perceptible ; as the rose is plucked before the thorn is felt ; as the wild-fire betrays into the bog, before the delusion is realized, or the danger known ; as a child caresses a snake, unconscious of its poisoned tooth,—so the pleasures of sin and of the world seduce and betray those who follow them, and none could know the danger except by the warning voice of God's Word, and the fatal experience of others. And you must not only avoid the dangers which the Word of God warns you of, but you must follow the course which it points out to you. You must come to Jesus not only to teach you, but to save you ; not to justify yourselves by your works, but to confess your sins and seek an interest in His atoning blood, that your sins may be blotted out, and that you may have the righteousness of Christ imputed to you for your justification ; for you cannot save yourselves, my young friends ; your own righteousness will not do it ; it is the death of Jesus alone that atones for the sins of the believer, and his righteousness which alone can justify before God ; and you must receive and believe this on the authority of God's Word, and you must just submit yourselves to the Word and the teaching of the Spirit of God, and believe what it reveals, and do implicitly what it requires of you, for your salvation ; trusting that God's promises, though you cannot understand how, will all be accomplished in

you, and resting on the experience of believers, that in following this course, and this course alone, they have found light and peace. The more you obey the will of God, the more will you feel assured that it is God's will; and that in following it, it will bring you to salvation.

In coming, therefore, to Jesus, my young friends, you must also come with the fixed resolution of surrendering yourselves wholly to Him in His service, and for His glory. It will not do to be half-and-half Christians; you must be altogether Christians if you would make progress in the Christian life, and know its privileges. You cannot serve God and mammon at the same time, nor Christ and the world. If you are truly Christ's, you will wish to keep back nothing from Him, and you will not trust your salvation to any other, nor desire any other to share your hearts with Him.

Again, you must come to Jesus in the use of appointed means. You must seek fully to know the Scriptures, which are alone able to make you wise unto salvation. You must take delight in reading them for yourselves, in seeking instruction from them, with prayer that the Holy Spirit may lead you to all truth. You must strive to profit to the utmost by the instructions of your parents or pious friends, and Sabbath school teachers, and such good books as may come within your reach. You must avoid the company of the evil and the ungodly and the profane, and cultivate the society of the pious and the good. You must feel your dependence on God, not only for temporal blessings, but for every needed grace, and be frequent in prayer to Him, through faith in Jesus, as your friend and intercessor. You must keep holy the Sabbath day, observe its ordinances and improve its privileges. You must give diligent attention to the preaching of the Word, and not forsake the assembling of yourselves together with God's people; and you must strive, in dependence on Divine grace, to avoid all that is evil, or has even the appearance of evil, and is calculated to familiarize you with it, and you must undeviat-

atingly follow that which is good—neither turning to the right hand nor to the left, to indulge the flesh or please men, but, casting aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset you, run with patience the race set before you.

You must, my young friends, come at once; come now. There is more danger in delay than you think of. Life is not yours, young as you are, to count upon, even for a day or an hour. Death may come, and while you are hesitating whether to serve Christ or Satan, may decide the question irrevocably for you. Even if death do not come, sin is searing your consciences and hardening your hearts by every indulgence, and by every delay in coming to Jesus, and making your conversion and salvation more and more improbable, every day you put off coming to Jesus. And oh, my young friends, reflect what an alternative is set before you—life or death! Heaven or Hell! Jesus for your Saviour or your Judge; an eternity of joy and blessedness with Him, or an eternity of misery with Satan.

My young friends, make your choice now; think of what Jesus hath done to warn you of danger and to save your souls. Think how He pitied you, when there was none other to pity and to help. Think of the glory which He left, and the humiliation which He endured, when He came from the bosom of His Father, to become man, to dwell on earth as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. How He, though He was rich, became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be made rich. Think how unceasingly He labored and taught, and how earnestly He exhorted and entreated sinners to flee from the wrath to come and seek His offered salvation. Think how He was reviled, and persecuted, and tormented. Think of His agony in the garden; his cruel mockings in the judgment hall; His brow bleeding with the crown of thorns; his back lacerated with the scourge; his body nailed to the accursed tree; His cry of agony—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—and, at last,

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the death struggle ; and that all this had to be endured before a single soul could be saved.

Behold, my young friends, the awful doom of sinners in the sufferings of Jesus. But think, too, that He who died to redeem, lives to save, that He is gone before to prepare mansions of glory for His people, and that He invites even you little children to come and enjoy the purchase of His blood. Do not fear to come, my young friends. You shall not be rejected, if you truly come. You have indeed nothing of your own to bring with you but your sins. But you need nothing ; come in faith, and even faith is the gift of God, and a token of His acceptance. He will bestow all you require out of His own fulness,—pardon and a new heart, and a title to Heaven ; the adoption of children and the spirit of adoption, and prepare you for glory, and at last take you to Himself. Then you shall awake to the sunless day which knows no night ; and you shall behold the holy city, with the streets of gold and crystal ; and you shall eat of the tree of life, and drink of the river of pleasures, and behold the King in His beauty, and bask yourselves in His favor, and join with saints and angels in the song of praise to God and to the Lamb, and partake of that unfading glory and of that unfailling, unceasing pleasures which they shall enjoy, who shall be with Christ, and who shall see even as they are seen, and know even as they are known.



SERMON XIII.

"If ye then be risen with Christ," &c.—Col. iii, 1—3.

THIS passage is remarkably characteristic of the style of thought and expression by which the writings of Paul are distinguished; of the bold antitheses, often involving apparent paradoxes which he so frequently employs, obscure and perplexing to those who are not familiar with his style, but singularly nervous and forcible, when once the key to their interpretation is obtained, and they are fully understood. What does the Apostle mean by being risen with Christ? Christ, we know, having suffered as a malefactor, the accursed death of the cross, and been buried, and having continued under the power of death till the third day, evinced that he was indeed the Son of God, by His coming forth from the grave, rising again from the dead, appearing on earth for forty days, and then ascending to Heaven to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; but the words in our text cannot apply to such a resurrection, for those whom he addresses had never thus died and risen again. Neither can they mean merely that Christ's resurrection from the dead is a proof or pledge of the final resurrection of believers, and a motive to them to seek Heavenly things, though this idea is included in the true meaning of the passage. The words intimate that those whom he addressed as believers were formerly dead, but were then risen again. What then was this condition characterized as death? Just the condition in which all men are said to be by nature, dead in trespasses and sin, not only dead as being condemned to eternal death, by the sentence which is denounced by the law on all, for all are sinners, but without spiritual life, unable to discern or apprehend spiritual things, as much so as the dead are incapable of the impressions, thoughts, and feelings of the

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living man ; but they who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are not only delivered from the sentence of death, and have the hope of eternal life, but are born again, have the principle of a new life implanted and developed in them, giving them spiritual apprehensions, generating spiritual affections and spiritual desires.

Man, we are informed, was originally created by God, after his own image, in righteousness and true holiness, but he fell by sin from this estate of life to God, and of life with God. Our first parents not only brought upon themselves, and all their posterity, the sentence of death, but became dead to those principles, motives, and affections which would incline and enable them to live to God, in conformity with His will. But they who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are raised from this spiritual death to spiritual life. They live under the influence of new principles, new objects of affection and desire, new motives ; they are raised from the death, or state of spiritual deadness and insensibility, in which they were sunk through corruption, to the life of godliness, and this through Christ ; and they are not only raised from this state of death and brought to this state of life by Christ, by the atonement which He made for sin in His own body on the cross, and by the righteousness which He wrought out for believers, by fulfilling the law while He endured the penalty, and by the life-giving, sanctifying influences of the Heavenly Spirit, which He purchased for and communicates to His people ; but they are risen with Him. In His life they have life ; their life is hid with Christ in God. He lives in them, they have fellowship in all the privileges of His resurrection ; because He died for sin, they die unto sin ; because He rose from the dead, they rise with Him to newness of life.

Here, then, my friends, is a great and all-important fact set before us, that if we have an interest in Christ, and in His salvation, we are risen with Him from our natural condition of death, and brought to newness of life, the same fact essentially which our Lord declared to Nico-

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demus, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." This is a doctrine which the world scoffs at, through carnal pride, which acknowledges no power, no sufficiency for man, but in man himself, and through want of faith in God. It is a change, of which, as they have had no experience of it, the worldly can have no conception ; they regard the doctrine as mystical, and the result of fanaticism. But how different is it with those who, through grace, have undergone the change. As the blind man who knew the results of his cure, and was persuaded in his own mind as to the source of it, but could not argue the matter with others, said "this one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see," so the man born again of the Holy Ghost knows the change that has taken place in him, and has no doubt in his own mind whence it has come ; and while he feels that he can give no explanation of the ground of his convictions to those who have not experienced it, he can yet say "whereas I was once spiritually dead, I now feel a new life within me ; whereas I was once blind, I now see ; whereas I was once deaf to the voice of conscience, and of the word, my spiritual ears are now opened ; my affections once estranged from Christ, are now drawn towards Him ; my desires formerly fixed on earth, are now set on things above. Whence this change ? not from myself I am constrained to say, but by the grace of God I am what I am."

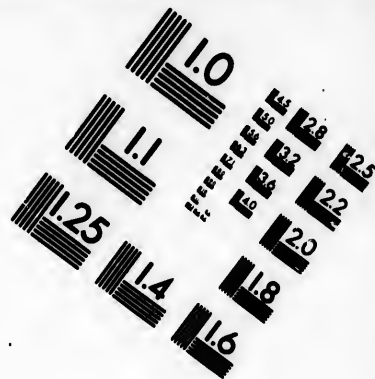
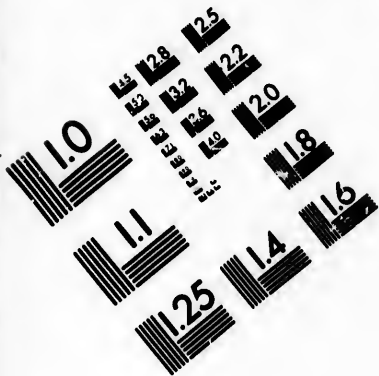
What an all-momentous enquiry is it for you, my friends, to ascertain whether you have undergone this change, seeing that our Lord hath solemnly declared that, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven." It is a dreadful thing for a man to deceive himself in regard to this matter, to fancy that he is in safety, while he has no evidence of his conversion, no certainty that he has got a new heart from the Lord ; and yet, I fear, multitudes satisfy themselves with a little outward reformation, without looking much to the evidences of an inward spiritual change, forgetful that it is

in the heart, that the change must be, that from thence are the issues of life, that there can be no holy life where the heart is not given to God, no meetness for Heaven while God does not reign there, that a mere partial outward reformation from worldly motives, or motives whether of present or prospective expediency,—whether to avoid present evils or future punishment, but not from desire to serve and glorify the Redeemer,—is not the religion which God requires, or will accept. They whose hearts are unchanged are yet spiritually dead, aliens, enemies to God, and heirs of eternal wrath.

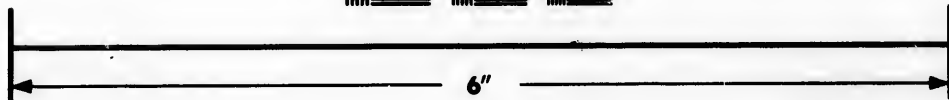
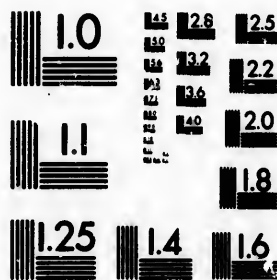
What, then, it may be asked, are the evidences of our being risen with Christ, of our being delivered from spiritual death, and brought to newness of life? “If ye then be risen with Christ,” saith Paul, “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” There are two evidences here given us of spiritual life, in the things which we will seek and desire, and in the things which we will not set our hearts on.

Let us, first, consider what are the things we shall be seeking, if we are converted men. To seek means to search in the desire of finding; to follow after or labor for, in the desire of obtaining and possessing; to set our affections upon, or as it is rendered in the margins of your Bibles, to mind, means to have the mind set upon, and the thoughts occupied with, as a matter of earnest concern and desire. Things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, mean Heavenly things; the things such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, which the Lord hath prepared for them that love Him. These are to be the chief objects of our desire, the engrossing subject of our thoughts, and the great end and object of our labors and efforts. All other things may be dispensed with, but these cannot, without utter and eternal ruin; they comprehend the one thing needful, the salvation of the immortal





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soul, the possession and enjoyment of Heaven. The desires and affections of man, by nature, are set on things below. Earth, its objects and its pleasures, its fears and its hopes, engross his mind and occupy his care ; its interests and enjoyments, its objects of dread and aversion, or of love and desire, are present, seen, felt realities ; the things of the future are shadowy and obscure ; there is nothing to draw his heart and win his affections towards them. But to the believer, Christ becomes the great connecting band between his soul and Heaven, by the attraction of the cross, drawing his heart upwards. Christ, the God-man, reveals God to the believer, not in the unapproachable character alone of the sovereign and Holy Creator, ruler and judge of all, but in the infinitude of His love and mercy towards our fallen sinful world.

While in the work of redemption, He magnifies His law, and shows what a hateful, and what a dreadful thing sin is, He shows His concern and compassion for souls perishing under it, and His desire to reclaim and to save them, in that He sent His only-begotten, His beloved, Son into the world in our nature, to suffer and die, the just for the unjust, that He might pay the penalty of their sins, satisfy the law, vindicate the holiness and the truth of God, while He offered a free and full pardon to all who shall believe on His name. Jesus, who dwelt on earth, in human nature, was with the Father in Heaven ; He who was a lowly, despised sufferer in the world, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, and as the God man, while He evinced His Godhead by His miracles, manifested the unspeakable love of God towards sinners, His earnest desire that they should turn from their sins, and accept the salvation provided and offered through the death of the cross ; and He who lived on earth, yet lives in Heaven. He died to purchase salvation for His people, and He lives to prepare them for, and establish them in the enjoyment of it ; and as He engaged and drew after Him the hearts and affections of His disciples, who followed and loved Him while on earth, and who

witnessed and shared in His works and labors of love, so as to create in them the assurance that His promises were no empty words,—that the glories of the Kingdom, which He invited them to seek, were no mere shadows, no dream of the imagination, but great, attainable, enduring realities, to excite in them the desire like Paul, to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord, and that while to them to live, was Christ to die, would be gain, so the same love constrains, the same motives actuate and animate believers still. Jesus is still the manifestation of God's love to them; though they never saw Him in the flesh, they have the record of His life; though they were not witnesses of His resurrection, they believe, on His assurance, that he came from the Father, and that He returned to the Father, that He lives and reigns, seated at the right hand of the throne; they love Him for all the manifestations of His love to them; they realize His love in still mediating and interceding with His Father on their behalf; they long to behold Him and to be with Him in glory; and with this end they love to seek Him, to serve Him, to show their love to Him, to enjoy communion with Him on earth, that they may be prepared at last for the inheritance of His people. Jesus is the supreme object of their affections. Love to Him as their Saviour, as their friend, as their everlasting portion, fills their hearts. They behold Him in glory by the eye of faith, invested with all the attractions of His character, and of His work of love on earth; and whatever will bring home to them more fully the assurance of His love to them, and show their love to Him, they will endeavor after and delight in.

Why are the things, which it is said the Christian will seek and set His affections on, called things *above*? *Above* is a relative term. We look up to the skies, or the Heavens, as we say above us, above in relation to ourselves. It is true that the inhabitants of the opposite side of our globe, in looking above, look in a direction exactly opposite to that in regard to which we use the

term. There is no above or below in actual space, except in reference to Him who uses the term. I would regard *above*, in our text, as having a relation to God, who is the Creator of all, the most exalted of all beings, in power, and glory, and in every perfection, He is raised above, and looks down upon all creation, as the lofty mountain overlooks the surrounding hills and plains. Whatever approaches nearest to God, in place or perfection, we regard as most exalted. Heaven is just where there is the fullest manifestation and enjoyment of God, and is, therefore, spoken of as above. God, we know, is everywhere, and at all times present. It has been disputed, whether Heaven, the abode of the blessed, be a locality, or only a condition or character. It is perhaps both; the latter it certainly essentially is. It is Christ dwelling by His Spirit in the heart of the believer, and making all there light, and purity, and peace, and love, and joy, through assimilation to, and enjoyment of, Himself; but although it cannot confine or limit God, it may be, as far as the Saints of God are concerned, a locality, a place in which they shall enjoy, most truly and most fully, manifestations and experiences of God's presence.

Some think that the new Heaven and the earth spoken of as the final abode of the blessed, shall be this earth renewed and purified. However this may be, we have it indubitably declared, that it will be a condition of pure, unsullied, and eternal happiness, in the full knowledge and enjoyment of God, a condition in which, raised above everything sinful, low, grovelling, our powers purified and fully developed, shall be exercised upon things, which shall afford an unceasing source of improvement and delight, when the contemplation of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and all the wonders of creating and redeeming love, shall be the unpalling, exhaustless occupation of every soul, the delightful subject of communion of all Saints, and the theme of praise to every heart.

Of the *above*, spoken of, it is said that it is "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." God seated

upon a throne is but an emblem of power and glory. The universe is His throne, He reigns supreme in and over all ; and Christ sitting at the right hand of God, is but the expression of the fact, that next in power and glory to the Father, is the Son, equal indeed essentially to the Father, in power and glory, for God is one,—second only in place and office in the work of redemption, as the eternal, only begotten Son of the Father.

It is probable, however, as Christ rose from the dead, and ascended up, to the view of those who witnessed it, to Heaven, in His glorified human body, that in this same body He is manifested to His Saints in glory, and that He was seen in vision by John, as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, as it had been slain,—that He is exhibited to those who are with Him in glory, in the scars which he received in the Judgment Hall, and the wounds which He suffered on the cross ; and it is revealed, too, that, when in the great day the sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them, and all, small and great, shall stand before God to receive their final doom, there shall be a visible manifestation of Christ in His glory. But, at all events, where Christ is, is a condition and place of exalted, ineffable glory to those who shall partake of it with Him ; they shall see Him as they are seen, and know Him as they are known,—that is as completely and perfectly in the glory of His Father, and of His holy angels, and thus they shall behold the King in His beauty.

On the other hand, the farther any beings are removed from the character and condition of God, the more degraded, the more debased they are. Hell, the lake of fire, the second death, are all terms descriptive of the condition of the fallen angels, who, the most exalted in their original state and privileges, by their rebellion against God, fell the lowest ; and sinners who fall away from the privileges of the Gospel calling, and reject the Saviour, shall have their place with them, where their

worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. The place of punishment, too, may no doubt be a locality, but it is no less a condition or character of hopeless degradation, and a condition of endless and unutterable suffering and misery. The character and state of the unrenewed man under the influence of sin and of the world is gradually deteriorating, sinking deeper and deeper, growing worse and worse. He is treasuring up in his recklessness, wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. But the character of the renewed man is the opposite. He looks to Christ as his Saviour; he trusts in Him as his helper; he rejoices in Him as his portion; his view is ever directed upwards; he seeks a growing assurance of an interest in Christ, an increasing meetness for being with Christ, in conformity to His will, in the enjoyment of communion with Him, and in appreciation of the privileges of His people. Such will ever be seeking to keep their affections from wandering after the perishable and corrupting things of the world, and to fix them upon Christ, keeping Him ever before them in all the loveliness of His character, and in all the attractions of His work of wondrous love; they will ever be meditating on Him in His humiliation, incarnation, sufferings and death, as undertaken and endured for their salvation; as addressing the invitations of His grace to them; as warning and entreating them to flee from the wrath to come, and take refuge in His love; or, as having sought, found, and recovered them from the ways of sin and death; as having quickened them in newness of life, and given them to experience the riches of His grace; or, as making His calls and exhortations to them, that, forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before, they should press on to the mark for the prize of their high calling, and offering them freely the treasures of His love, and the gifts and graces of His Spirit, to encourage and sustain them in their Heavenward course.

Shall we doubt His power, my friends? He sitteth at

the right hand of God ; He has all power in Heaven and on earth. And why is He there? Not only by right of His inheritance as the Eternal Son ; not alone for His own glory, that He may show forth His triumphs ; but He is there, too, in His love to His people, that He may be near the Father ; that He may plead and intercede for them. He is there as our great High Priest, with His own blood ; with the seams and scars of His mangled, wounded body, wherein He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him, that by His stripes we might be healed.

Oh, what a motive, what a call for us, my friends, to look upwards, to lift our eyes and our desires above the debasing things of sense and sin, and to set our affections on things above ; seeking, on the one hand, deliverance from the condemnation and the power of sin, which would sink the soul, unless removed, in the depths of degradation and misery throughout eternity ; and, on the other, that blessed and glorious salvation, which has been purchased by the humiliation and sufferings, and secured for believers, by the resurrection and ascension to glory of our blessed Redeemer.

Will any, my friends, with such motives, aids, and encouragements, dare to add to his sin, that of despising and rejecting such a salvation and such a Saviour? How shall they, in so doing, escape the damnation of hell? Oh, strive to make your calling and election sure, without delay ; delay betokens indifference, and indifference danger, for what said the Lord, to the Church of the Laodiceans, "I would thou wert cold or hot, so then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

But our text not only gives us the exhortation to set our affections upon things above, but to abstain from setting them upon things on the earth. Now what does this imply? Does it mean that the things of earth are to have no place, no share in our hearts ; that we are

to be utterly reckless and regardless of these ; that we are, in the literal meaning of the words, to take no care what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed, trusting that all such things will be provided and supplied to us, without any concern, any efforts of ours? Are we, as stoics, to afflict the body and subdue every natural desire, for the mere sake of mortifying the flesh? Are we to refuse the blessings which Providence offers to our labors and our industry, and be indifferent about making homes and suitable provision for ourselves and our families? Are we, as cynics, to withdraw from the society and fellowship of men, from the sympathies and endearments of family relations and social intercourse, and to devote our whole time to solitary meditation upon things above? Assuredly not, my friends. This is neither the meaning of our Lord, nor of His Apostle. What is meant is, that we are not to set our affections, or give our care unduly, disproportionately, to the things of the world. We are not to be over anxious about them, so as to interfere with our supreme and first regard to the things that concern our souls and their everlasting welfare. The body is the handmaid of the soul ; the health of the former will be promotive of the best interests of the latter. It is alike injurious to the soul to neglect the body, or to pamper it, to injure its vigor, by unnecessary austerities and mortifications, or to feed its lusts and appetites by pernicious indulgence. It may alike be unfitted for its appointed functions, by privation and excess.

With regard to the mind, too, retirement and meditation are necessary to the welfare of the spiritual life. But entire seclusion from intercourse with our fellow men is no less destructive of a healthy mental or moral condition. To keep it fixed, and constantly poring over one subject, is injurious ; it is not conducive to sound judgment and correct views, but the contrary ; variety and occasional relaxation invigorate and strengthen the mental powers. Wealth, though a snare and a root of many

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evils, when sought for its own sake, or to minister to
 fleshly lusts, and made an idol of, may be a great bless-
 ing, in the right seeking and right administration of it.
 Ambition of power and influence in the world, for self-
 aggrandizement, is despicable and degrading; when used
 for the good of our fellow men, to the glory of God,
 these are most precious helps and encouragements to
 labour in works of benevolence and mercy. What will
 more tend to lead astray the heart, and to enervate it for
 duty, than making idols of children, or of parents, or of
 friends, by bringing these into competition with Christ?
 But what will so much strengthen the Christian for labours,
 for sacrifices, for sufferings, as a sense of the deep respon-
 sibilities which such ties lay upon us, to be faithful to
 Christ, and to the souls of those who are connected with
 and endeared to us by such bonds? What will excite
 more to filial love and duty; what more to parental soli-
 citude and watchfulness; what more to conjugal faithfulness
 and tenderness; what more to a concern for souls
 in general, than the imperative demands which are made
 upon us by all the various relations in life to honor Christ
 in them and through them?

But while this is true, we must allow no worldly object
 to become an idol to the subordinating of Christ, or an
 object of desire to the injury of our souls. We must not
 let the objects even of our strongest and most legitimate
 earthly affections come in the way of Christ, so as to rob
 Him of any portion of the supreme love and duty of our
 hearts or lives which He demands, for, said He, "he that
 loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy
 of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than
 Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that taketh not his
 cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."
 There is not much risk, my friends, of our neglecting
 the world, or worldly duties and interests, for Christ.
 Love to Christ, and zeal for His glory will make the
 believer earnest to know and to do whatever, in the
 world, duty or love to Him may demand of him; but, alas!

my brethren, there is great danger of Christ being subordinated to the world, and the engrossing pursuits, interests, or pleasures of the world, shutting out Christ from the heart, and thrusting aside His claims upon our affections and our services. What multitudes manifest indubitably that they are, whatever their profession of religion may be, whatever outward service they may render professedly to Christ, still of the world ! Their eager, earnest pursuit of the things of earth shows too plainly that their affections are, little, if at all, set upon things above ; that the world is their first, their chief concern. Were their affections truly fixed upon Christ, and the things which are at God's right hand, were they really placing the care of their souls and eternal things first, this one would not allow his closet devotions to be interrupted, or set aside or delayed, till a more convenient season, by the calls of the world. If he could not withdraw the necessary time from the hours of labour, he would withdraw it from the hours of sleep. Neither would that other one dispense with the family altar ; without this he would feel that his household had no blessing on their labours, no protection in their slumbers. Nor would this other, be so careless about sanctifying the Lord's day, and waiting on and profiting by the services of God's house ; this would be to him a precious season for lifting his thoughts above, and freeing them from the entanglements of worldly affairs, of holding communion with Christ through His word and ordinances, and of meditating on the things which belong to his peace. This one would not make himself, as he does, the slave of business ; that one would not give way to unhallowed lusts or sinful indulgences ; this one would not be engrossed, as he is, by thoughtless amusements, by giddy or vicious pleasures, however sanctioned by the world, nor by unprofitable company ; nor would any make principle succumb to expediency, truth, or justice or honesty to self interest.

If in any way, my friends, or to any extent, you allow worldly or carnal motives to set aside Christ and Heavenly

things from your affections, you have need to take heed to yourselves, for these are all indications of the supremacy of the carnal nature, and that you are not yet risen with Christ to the power of the new life. Oh, see that you are not endangering your souls by carelessness about the world, and indifference to Christ, that you are not ever sacrificing any privilege of your high calling for worldly objects, or fleshy indulgences, but that you are seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the world only in so far as it will help you forward in your Christian course, to the glory of your Redeemer.

Our text concludes with one of these apparent contradictions or paradoxes, which, I have already remarked, are so frequently to be found in the writings of Paul. We have seen that he speaks of believers, once dead in sin, as risen with Christ, to newness of life. He now speaks of them as being dead, while yet their life is hid with Christ in God. This just means that believers who are alive in Christ Jesus to God, are therefore dead in sin; it has no longer the power or influence over them, which it once had; it can no longer engage their affections, or fill their hearts and lead them captive at the will of Satan, as it once did; dead to one class of objects, they are yet alive to others; the old man is crucified, but the new man lives, and just because the new man lives, the old man is crucified and dies. Christ becomes the life of the believer; He is the source and the sustainer of it; and it is hid with Christ, as a precious treasure hid in a place of security, in God. Christ and the Father are one, and believers are one with Christ. If then, my friends, ye are indeed dead to sin, and your life hid with Christ in God, what a precious security have you, that your souls shall never die? If God be their keeper, who shall destroy them? If He be for you, who shall be against you? Who shall separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus your Lord? But who, it may be asked, can be said to be dead to sin? None are indeed absolutely insensible to its power, while in this life; but in the be-

liever there is a new principle implanted which will eventually destroy its influence over him ; and death in Scripture is often used in this indefinite sense, as to time,—the sentence against Adam was, “in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” yet he lived many years. What is meant, therefore, is that he then incurred the sentence of death. So in our text, dead to sin, means being under the power of a principle which will make us die to sin, and give us the victory over it, deliver us from its power, and restore to our hearts the glorious liberty of the children of God. The Apostle tells us that he died daily to sin, under the influence of this new life. Conversion is an act, sanctification is a work. .

How is it with you, my friends? If you be indeed risen with Christ, you will, from day to day, be subduing and eradicating sin more and more, resisting, crucifying it ; for the assurance to believers is, “sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” You will be setting your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, seeking evidence that your life is so hid with Christ, in God, that when He, who is your life, shall appear, ye also shall appear with Him in glory.



SERMON XIV.

"What could have been done more to my Vineyard, &c."

—Isaiah v. 4 & 5.



HIS chapter contains the complaint of the Lord, by the Prophet, against Israel, under the parable of a vineyard, which he had fenced in, and protected, and cultivated with the greatest care, and done all things for it, which could be done, and which, when he justly looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought forth wild grapes, and which on this account, he threatens to abandon to neglect and desolation. This, my friends, was a true complaint of the Lord, in regard to the people which he had chosen, and separated for himself, and which he had so peculiarly blessed and favoured; as Moses said, "What nation is there so great, which hath God so nigh unto them; that hath statutes and judgments so righteous," and yet they had proved themselves a stubborn and rebellious people, ungrateful for past mercies, and fearless of threatened judgments. The Lord calls upon the people of Judah to judge between Him and His vineyard, that, they themselves being judges, His judgments against them may be justified. And these threatenings, my friends, were really and awfully inflicted. The land was given up to the spoiler, as it is recorded in the Book of Chronicles. He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man, or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age. He gave them all into his hand, and they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof, and them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon, where they were servants to him and to his

sons, until the reign of the king of Persia. Now, this history most plainly indicates, that the judgments of the Lord are punishments against sin, and warnings of danger and calls to repentance; and the dealings of the Lord with his people, my friends, are recorded for our admonition and instruction. But how unwilling are men to see the Lord's hand either in His mercies, or in His afflictive dispensations? They seek to resolve the causes of prosperity or of adversity, into the mere outward means and instrumentalities, by which the great Disposer of all events brings these about, that they may look with complacency upon the one, as the result of their own wisdom or energy, or good fortune; that they may not be called upon to acknowledge their responsibility to God for mercies received at His hand; and that they may not be humbled, on the other hand, by the thought that it is their own sins, but only their ill-fortune that afflicts them; that they may not be shut up to the conclusion, that deliverance or relief is to be found, not by human instrumentalities, but alone by repentance and turning to the Lord.

This, we believe, to be the great cause of men's unwillingness to see the hand of God in providence; that they shrink, on the one hand, from the feeling of obligation which His mercies would lay upon them, and on the other, because they love their sins, and do not desire to give them up and turn from them in humiliation to God. Or, if the Lord's judgments at times humble men's hearts for a little, how soon is the impression worn off with multitudes; and like Pharaoh, their hearts are only the more hardened by their recurrence. Let us consider how it is with ourselves, my brethren, in this respect. It is but a few short months since the angel of death was making fearful desolation throughout the world—in our land and among the families of our community—by means of the destroying pestilence. Truly it was walking abroad as at noon-day, and making the hearts of men, yea, even of the stout-hearted, to quail with fear; and many careless

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and unbelieving were brought to say within their souls—
“surely the Lord’s hand is in it”; and when a fast was
proclaimed, there was a thronging to the place of prayer,
and doubtless there was confession of sin and humbling
of soul, and a trembling before the Lord; and doubtless
tears were shed, and petitions were urged for mercy, and
that the Lord’s hand might be removed from us; and
doubtless there were vows made, and resolutions formed;
and the Lord, my friends, was entreated, He heard the
prayers of His people—the plague was stayed. But alas,
how fleeting and evanescent, has the impression, we fear,
been with multitudes—how feeble and fruitless in most!
How small may have been the number of those righteous
ones, by whose prayers the pestilence was in mercy with-
drawn; it may have been that for the sake of but ten
righteous, that this great mercy was shown to us. Oh let
us not be high minded, but fear. Let us not rest with sat-
isfied complacency upon the thought, that God saw good
in us, and therefore withdrew His judgments; but let us
rather think how little fruits of our humiliation we are
exhibiting; and let us fear lest the Lord be but dealing in
forbearance a little longer with His vineyard, digging and
dunging it, if yet it may bear fruit; and let us, during the
day of our merciful visitation, be humbling ourselves be-
fore God, praying that the work of reviving may go for-
ward among us, that we may be quickened into increased
watchfulness and diligence, marking the dispensations of
the Lord which are looming upon us from the distance,
dispensations which we may not put away from ourselves,
which are far from having no reference to ourselves, and
which, we know not how soon, may, if we humble not
ourselves before the Lord, for many evils and many of-
fences, for which we are amenable, involve our own bor-
ders in the horrors and ravages of the bloody and deso-
lating struggle between contending nations, given up by
God to this fearful scourge for their sins.

Let none say that the war is far off,—that it does not
bear upon us, and cannot, therefore, be regarded as a

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judgment against our sins, or a warning to us to repentance and duty. When one member of the body suffers, the other members cannot be unaffected by it; the cause has need to be looked to, lest it may spread over all. We may not slumber and repose, while our neighbour's house is on fire. Is not Britain, whose armies are contending and suffering, as we believe, in warfare, that was forced upon her and in a just cause, who has been steeping a foreign land with the gushing streams of her best blood,—whose homes and hearths, from the palace to the cottage, have been desolated by the sacrifice of countless victims to the insatiate god of war,—where thousands of parents have been made childless, and the hearts of widows desolate,—where brothers and sisters and friends have been made to shed burning tears at the agonizing thought of brethren and of kindred, whose lifeless, mangled remains strew the field of blood, or who have sunk under the no less fatal ravages of disease, of fatigue, or of exposure,—is not this Britain our fatherland,—if not the land of our birth, and of childhood's sweet memories and fond recollections, at least the land of our fathers, and the home of our kindred, and the land of our deepest, fondest, most hallowed associations? And have not many also, throughout this country of our adoption, sons or brothers or friends enrolled among the ranks of war, while many may be mourning sad bereavements, and others trembling for the fate of those near and dear to them? Independently of all this, are we not by kindred,—by our civil institutions,—by our religious privileges,—by fostering care enjoyed, and succour and protection received,—and by our dearest sympathies, an integral part of that world-renowned and time-renowned nation, with which we glory in being connected, whose honour and exaltation causes our hearts thrill with gladness,—whose humiliations sink them shame,—whose prosperity we rejoice in as our own, an whose afflictions our hearts are overwhelmed in sorrow with whose highest and best interests our own are so intimately connected, and on which they are so materia.

dependent,—and above all, shall we say, that we have no share in this mighty struggle, if it be, as we believe it to be, a contest for the ascendancy of liberty over despotism, if it be to prevent the encroaching aggressions of the powerful and ambitious over the weak, and to hinder the building up of a tyrannical rule, which would cast its shackles alike over the bodies and the souls of the world's inhabitants, and which, in consequence, becomes a contest between truth and error, between religion and fanaticism,—shall we say that we have nothing to do with the struggles of that nation, which has been the home, the refuge, the bulwark of civil and religious liberty for ages, whose very name is identified with the cause of freedom, which first, under the influence of Gospel light, struck off the fetters from its slaves, and stood forth before the world as the champion of the equal rights of men, and which hath no less struck off the galling chains which enthralled the minds of men, and maintained the principle of freedom of conscience and of unrestricted toleration for every opinion, which did not, by the allowing of individual license, infringe upon the great rights and liberties of all? Shall we dissociate ourselves from and disown in God's dealings with her,—that land, which has for ages been not only most illustrious for intellectual knowledge, and for Gospel truth, for Bible knowledge, and for Christian morals, but foremost in diffusing the word of God, and the blessings and the privileges of the Gospel salvation throughout the world? But it may be said, if we have such reason to glory in being associated with Britain; if such be the objects of Britain's contentings; if such be the directing principles of Britain's counsels; if such be the justice of Britain's cause; and if the Lord maintain the right, how is it that He hath smitten her with judgments? How is it that discord hath been permitted to distract her counsels, inefficiency in her official arrangements to mar her efforts, disease and pestilence to sweep off tens of thousands from her ranks, and notwithstanding almost superhuman

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efforts of valour and self-devotion in her soldiery, and the expenditure of precious life and of countless treasures, that her endeavours have been without success ; that her position is apparently more critical now than it was at first ; the struggle that is before her yet more arduous and seemingly farther from a termination ; the sacrifices yet to be made, still greater, and the results still more uncertain ? Politicians and the wise of this world trace all these things to secondary causes. The Bible teaches us to assign them to God as the supreme disposer of all events, who taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and ordereth all things according to the counsel of His own will. And in this view, my friends, they are just indicative that the Lord hath a controversy with our nation, that He is saying to her, as the Spirit saith in the book of Revelation, to the Church of Ephesus, " Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee," something that He hath seen to need His chastisement, to warn of danger, to awaken to repentance, and to stir up to seek the Lord.

Now, doubtless, with all the glory which she has attained to, with all the high character and standing which she holds, with all the privileges she enjoys, there exist among us great and pernicious sins, which may well have provoked the Lord to anger against our nation, and led Him to give it over to the fruits of its own counsels and doings, sins which have sprung up from abuse of the very mercies which have hitherto been vouchsafed to us.

Those sins which are alluded to in the chapter from which our text is taken, as having brought the judgments of the Lord against Israel, and given their land and its cities to desolation, and its inhabitants to the sword and to captivity, are many of them just the sins which are most characteristic of our own land, and on account of which we have need to take warning and to humble ourselves, while the Lord's anger is kindled against us but a little, lest, if we repent not, sorer judgment should be allowed to fall upon us. We may mention, first of all, pride, national pride, which is just the aggregate

of individual pride, of which it is said "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." By the long enjoyment of national prosperity and national honour, national glory becomes, as we fear it has been too much the case in regard to ourselves, an idol,—we pride ourselves upon it,—we make our individual boast of it,—we rely upon it, and it comes to us in the place of God,—we are apt to place all our confidence in our civil institutions, in the guarantee which they afford for wisdom, integrity, and efficiency among our rulers, and in their counsels,—in the vastness of our territory,—the amplitude of our resources—the extent of our commerce,—the number of our fleets,—the organization and discipline of our armies, and the personal fame and valor of our soldiers,—forgetful that all these will avail nothing without the blessing of Him, who confoundeth the mighty in the imagination of their hearts, and whose alone it is to give the victory.

Oh, how little is our former humiliation felt by us now, under the more remote judgments, on account of which we are now called upon to humble ourselves before the Lord? They do not so much bear upon us personally; they are as yet but in the distance; they may pass away; they may never reach our borders or affect our interests. Many may say, "what have we to do with this war; what have we to do with the sins of Britain or her afflictions?" We fear there has been much of this self-glorying and of this vain self-dependence alike among high and low. Though the cause has been good, self-aggrandizement, and not the honor of the Redeemer, or the advancement of His Kingdom, has, we fear, too much filled the national mind. Trust in human wisdom and human counsels have too much hindered seeking counsel from God. Dependence upon human instrumentalities have placed God too much out of view, and the Lord hath been teaching us by sad experience, that, unless the cause be not only His cause, but undertaken and carried forward for His sake, it cannot prosper; that no wisdom will supply the

place of His counsel, and that no might will avail if the Lord fight against us.

Have we not, my friends, much of this pride, much of this self-sufficiency, and is there not much of this national glorying among us? Oh, may not then the Lord be speaking to us from a distance, in a voice of warning, from the fields of England's mingled glory and humiliation, from the graves of the noble and the valiant and the good, who have shed their hearts' blood in her defence, with the most heroic devotion,—and a voice from those, who are yet, with unflinching ardour, confronting disease and toils and exposure and the battle in the same cause,—a voice calling to us to humble ourselves in confession of our sins, individual and national, and to strive, by divine grace, to put them away from us, that the judgments of the Lord may be restrained,—that the right may be maintained,—that His Kingdom may be advanced, past events overruled to His own glory and our profiting,—peace and harmony restored to the world, and to the promotion and advancement of that blessed time, when the Prince of Peace shall reign supreme over all hearts, when wars shall cease, when the sword shall be turned into the ploughshare, and the spear into the pruning-hook, and men shall not learn the art of war any more?

Another sin mentioned by the prophet as having called down the judgment of God against Israel is also attributable, we fear, to ourselves in a very lamentable measure, and that is covetousness,—an eager lusting after the wealth of this world, which often leads to use, unscrupulously, means for its attainment, which indicate greater desire after the object, than concern for the approbation and the glory of God, and which leads also to an unsanctified use of unsanctified gains. What a grasping eagerness do we behold after the things of this world? How much are they sought for by multitudes, as if they were the one thing needful? How much toil, anxiety, wearing out, absorbing care is bestowed upon what ministers to or adorns the outer man? How much of what concerns the soul

and eternity is sacrificed in the pursuit of these perishable things? How are everlasting interests risked and endangered, through greed for these; and how much is God forgotten, His will disregarded, and His grace despised, in the absorbing pursuit of the mammon of unrighteousness, and our hearts and affections seduced from God and devoted to this soul-corrupting idol?

Much, my friends, do we need the lesson, that national and individual prosperity are alike from the Lord; that the silver and the gold are His; that we cannot attain it, unless He prosper our labors, and that, when attained, unless it be used to His glory, it will bring a curse and not a blessing. With how many, may we fear that this is the case, that they have little reference to the glory of God, either in the acquisition or in the distribution of their wealth; that they little think of Him as the giver, or feel themselves to be the stewards of the grace of God in using it. How few so allot and apportion their means under a due sense of their accountability, that they may honour the Lord with all their substance!

Have we not need then, my brethren, to try and to prove ourselves in regard to this matter—in this respect, also, to confess and to put away our sins, and that the wrath of the Lord may be turned from us? A grievous woe, my friends, is denounced against this sin by the prophet,—“woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place,—of a truth many houses shall be desolate; even great and fair without inhabitant. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer, shall yield an ephah.”

Another evil to which the prophet alludes, and on account of which the judgments of the Lord may have been poured out on our land, and might well be visited on our community, is the love of worldly, carnal, unsanctified pleasures, amusements, and revelries associated with intemperance. These were among the things that provoked the Lord against Israel, and made Him give power to

their enemies, to subdue and afflict them, and to lead them away captive. And may they not be among the causes why the Lord is afflicting our nation, and humbling us under the rod, for when we look abroad upon the general aspect of society, how few and feeble comparatively are the indications of earnest, vital godliness, which, amid all our high privileges, it exhibits? Even among our professedly religious communities, our churches and our congregations, what a mixture of world-seeking and of self-seeking,—what an eagerness to associate the objects and pleasures of sense,—yea, vicious indulgence of the lusts of the flesh, with a hope for the soul—a hope of Heaven!

How many give but too decisive testimony that they are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God. They have no enjoyment in their professed religion, no experience of the constraining power of the love of God in their hearts, making His service their highest privilege, no experience of a sweet, sanctified and sanctifying communion with Him in His worship, and in the doing of His will; they use their religion only as an atonement for their sin and carnal indulgence, if possible to propitiate God and allay their fears, while they are seeking their own well-doing, and their own pleasure. Alas, how many frivolous pursuits and amusements consume the time, absorb the interest, and seduce the hearts of many, who, nevertheless, make a profession of the Gospel,—who pass the time, which they can spare from the business of the world, in mere unprofitable conversation, thoughtless mirth and gaiety, or reckless revelry. To how many hath the society of the worldly more attractions than that of the people of God. The gay assembly, and the giddy dance, or the exciting but demoralizing exhibitions of the theatre, the saloon or the gambling house,—even the low haunts of debauchery, have more attractions than the House of God and the services of the sanctuary. How fearfully, my friends, do the ravages of intemperance desolate the hearths and the hearts

of many homes, and seem to cry out for the vengeance of the Lord, against a land thus polluted and defiled,—has given to the idolatry of the world, and to the practice of iniquity?

In connection with the sadly general spread of infidelity, ungodliness and immorality, there is to be deplored, as alike a cause and a consequence of these, the prevalence of Sabbath breaking in various forms and in various degrees. There are the open despisers of God's day and ordinances, who do their own will, and seek their own pleasure on the Lord's day openly; and there are those who, though they make a profession of honoring, sadly desecrate it, by the listless or formal discharge of its duties,—who, though they give their bodily presence in the sanctuary, give not their hearts to the Lord's service,—who strive not after the knowing or the doing of His will in sincerity, but to whom the services of His day and its ordinances are a weariness and a restraint,—who will relax in them, in so far as they think they may, without forfeiting their religious character,—who intermit, from slight causes, their attendance at church,—who satisfy their consciences, it may be, by one diet of worship on the Sabbath, or attend prayer meetings, only so often as they think may be necessary to vindicate their religious character,—and who gladly lay hold of any excuse to escape the irksome duties of religion.

Many other sins, my friends, might be particularized, which may have called down the Lord's judgments,—sins in high places, and sins among the people; but I have mentioned enough, and more than enough, to make us feel that the Lord has just ground of controversy with us; that we have need of judgments to make us tremble for our sins, and mourn over them before the Lord; and let us not, because they are spoken of as national sins, think that we have no concern with them, the sin of every individual is just a portion of the aggregate sin of the nation. We may regard our sin as but a drop in the

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bucket, but it may be that drop which causes the cup of wrath to overflow, and the judgments of the Lord to be poured forth against us. It is indeed with our own sins that we have to do, but these are an integral portion of the nation's sins, and we fall, along with others, under judgment because of them. But as we are not to take individual afflictions as a measure of individual sin, so neither are we to take national judgments as a measure of national guilt; but apply nationally as well as individually the declaration, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." That disasters have attended the armies of Britain in the present war is not to be regarded as an indication that she is more guilty than other nations associated with her, or than those that are ranged against her, but only that there is guilt, which must be repented of, and sins that must be forsaken, and pride that must be humbled, an intimation that, if she improve not her high privileges, and fulfil not her high calling, as a professing Christian and God-fearing nation, the Lord will allow her glory to set, and bring about His purposes by other instrumentalities, leaving the guilt and the shame upon her, and accomplishing, by her humiliation and disgrace, that very object which might have been attained to her honour by her instrumentality. This consolation indeed, my friends, will the faithful people of God enjoy, if a nation's sins have carried them along with it through many trials, afflictions, and humiliations, that nevertheless, that which their hearts hath desired hath been fulfilled, and that God hath been glorified in it, and they shall not lose the reward of their faithfulness. But the Christian will not be satisfied with this individual concern; he will strive that the Lord be entreated for His land, and for His fellow-countrymen, that they may better realize their high privileges and their lofty calling; and the open door for usefulness which is set before them. It has been, hitherto, the rejoicing of God-fearing Britons to behold Britain, with all her faults, ranking among the foremost of Christian nations in the cause of liberty, of

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humanity, of truth, and of Godliness, ever ready to succour the oppressed, and to maintain the right, and using the mighty influence of her name, her commerce, her wide-spread dominion, to circulate the word of God, and diffuse the blessings of Gospel knowledge and Gospel morality; and it will be the earnest prayer and endeavour of her sons and daughters still, who, as Christians, value the high privileges they have enjoyed under her sway, that she may not fall short of the glorious calling which seems more especially open to her, than to any other nation of earth; that she may not tarnish her past honours as a God-fearing, God-loving land; but that she, and all her dependencies, may alike arouse themselves under the dealings and warnings of the Lord, to humble themselves before Him, and that all who love Britain, and seek Britain's true glory, may bestir themselves, and lend a hearty and willing hand to purge the land from her sins and her pollutions, to put away from us everything that defileth, seeking the Lord, in confession of sin and in supplication for grace, that the paralyzing influence of His judgments may be withdrawn,—that all our energies may be put forth in the cause of Christ and of Godliness,—that the strongholds of sin and Satan may be overthrown,—that the reign of truth and righteousness, of peace and liberty, may be established,—that the Lord may preside in all our counsels as a nation, regulate and rule all her acts to His glory, and to our good,—dwell in every house, and bless every household of the land,—cause His name to be recognized by us as a people, in our public conduct and in our private acts, as Lord and King, and make us to be a willing people in the accomplishment of all His purposes of mercy to the world in the day of His power,—that the blessing of the Lord our God may be upon us,—that peace may be within our borders, and prosperity, contentment and social happiness, the fruit of Godliness be alike within the palaces of the great, and the cottages of the poor. “What,” may we well say in reference to our mercies and our privileges, “could the Lord have

done more for His vineyard that He has not done," and woe be to us if we repent not of our sins, and harden our hearts, while the Lord is dealing with us in mingled mercies and judgments. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near, let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and He will abundantly pardon."

We shall not allude to the objections of those who say "what is the use of humiliation and prayer? The Lord's decrees and purposes are fixed and unalterable. Prayer cannot change them." We trust that such opinions have no place among you, that it is enough for you that the Lord invites, that your hearts call you to prayer, and that many of you can say from your past experience, "truly the Lord hath heard my prayer, and hath sent relief in the day of trouble," and that you will esteem this occasion a high privilege.



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SERMON XV.

Awake, awake! &c.—Isaiah lii. 1-3.



ZION or Jerusalem is here represented under the figure of a captive, who has, by the fate of war, been reduced to the condition of a slave, and been long held in bondage, on the eve of redemption. The words of our text are evidently applicable to a person of rank and distinction, and it was not unusual for persons of the highest rank, after the issue of an unsuccessful contest, to be carried off by the victors and sold as slaves in foreign lands. Think, my friends, of the dreadful condition of such an one, a prince or a noble, accustomed to have his every will obeyed, surrounded by social and domestic refinements and comfort, enjoying the endearments of home and family, seized by the rude hand of the spoiler, whose avarice, in the hope of a large price for his ransom, is his only security from violence, neglect, or death,—ruthlessly sold as an article of merchandise to strangers,—separated, in all probability, for ever, from country, kindred, home, and family, to become the slave of the will, or the victim of the uncontrolled desires of others. What a melancholy type of the forsaken, wretched, helpless condition of Zion and Jerusalem during the Babylonish Captivity! The great and proud city had been delivered up to the spoiler,—her children carried away captive or degraded to the condition of slaves in their own land,—her walls and bulwarks all overthrown,—the holy city no longer the abode of the Lord's chosen people,—afflicted because of their transgressions, and trodden by the uncircumcised and the unclean,—her temple profaned and burnt to the ground,—her palaces and their proud possessors alike humbled in the dust. But her restoration was foretold, and the time of her redemption drew nigh. It is in reference to this that the prophet gives the call and makes the promises in our text.

Let us, for a little, in the first place, consider this call, and these promises, and then, secondly, make an application of them for our own instruction and profit. And may the Lord graciously accompany with His blessing the truths which shall be addressed to us.

Let us then, under the first head, consider, 1st, the call,—“Awake, awake! put on thy strength O Zion.” Mount Zion was the stronghold of Jerusalem; it was regarded previously as almost impregnable; it was employed as a type or a metaphor to represent all that was steadfast and immovable; and now the prophet addresses it not as divested of its inherent essential strength, but as if it had been asleep—in a state of lethargy and prostration, sunk in despairing inactivity. But the time was now come for her to awake, to arouse, to cast off her despair, to summon up all her energies to a desperate but not to a hopeless effort, an effort to which the Lord, who had given her over to captivity, called her to improve the opportunity which He was about to afford her of casting off her yoke, and to work out the restoration which He, in His grace, purposed for her, and was now about to accomplish. There was still power and energy enough in the scattered captive sons of Zion, to whose memory she was still dear and precious, if once aroused by the Lord’s favor and by the openings of His providence, to restore her fallen greatness; but it must be by a special and devoted effort. Many difficulties and obstacles lay in the way, but the Lord, who can supply the needed strength and sufficiency, called them to the work, and promised that their efforts would not prove futile or vain. But this was not to be effected by despairing apathy and inactivity; there must be faith in the purpose and promises of God, and a faithful, diligent, active improvement of the opportunity, and employment of the means of grace, in order to its attainment. “Awake, awake! put on thy strength, O Zion.”

But again, the Prophet changes his metaphor, “Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.” This

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may be understood to refer to the restoration of the temple service, and of the ordinances of God's house, which had been interrupted,—the priests having been spoiled of their holy and beautiful vestments, and sent away captive; the sanctuary having been robbed of its ornaments and utensils, and the temple itself destroyed. And the prophet may be understood as calling upon the priests to prepare to resume their office,—to restore the temple service,—to clothe themselves anew with the beautiful garments of their sacred calling; and upon the people to unite and pour in their offerings for the restoration of the ordinances of their holy religion, that the Lord might again dwell in the midst of her, and inhabit, by His manifested presence, His holy temple. Or the words may be regarded as having reference to a bride, under which metaphor Jerusalem—especially the spiritual Jerusalem—is frequently described, as in Revelations where the new Jerusalem is represented as coming down from Heaven, adorned as a bride to meet the bridegroom. The bride borne away by the hands of the spoiler, a captive slave in the garments of slavery—desolate, helpless, and despairing—is aroused by the joyful sound that her captivity is near an end, that her redemption is at hand; she hears the glad summons to cast aside the livery of her servitude, and resume her bridal vesture, her beautiful garments which she had put on in happier days and under better auspices.

The former view of the words harmonizes best with the last clause of the verse, the last view is more conformable to the succeeding verse.

"Shake thyself from the dust, arise and sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion." The captive bride, once decked in the beautiful bridal robes, preparing to meet her espoused husband, is represented as having abandoned herself to utter despair, rolling in the dust,—an abject outcast, representing the degraded condition of Jerusalem, but now called upon to arise,—to shake off

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the dust of her degradation, and to loose herself from the bands of her neck, the galling fetters of her grievous bondage. Such was the condition of the holy city and her children, in bondage to the Babylonians; and what a joyous call would it be to every true-hearted son or daughter of Zion, for her to awake to put on her strength, to arise and shake herself from the dust of her humiliation,—to cast off her yoke,—to resume her place,—to invest herself with all her blessed and glorious privileges, as the holy city, the city of the most high God, as the type of the Lamb's bride, the Church, with robes washed white in His own blood. But, my friends, the call is not given without a promise. Little would it have availed to call and stir up the Jews to revolt against the Assyrian monarch, into whose power the Lord had delivered them for their transgressions, had not the Lord, at the same time, purposed and promised their redemption or restoration. The means, without His help and effectual purpose, would have availed nothing to the end; but the Lord never calls His people to the use of means, without giving the assurance, that He will make these means effectual for the accomplishment of that to which He calls them.

Let us now, for a little, consider secondly, under this head, the promises contained in our text; and the first promise is, "for henceforth there shall no more come into thee, the uncircumcised and the unclean." This promise, as we said, was more consistent with the view that the beautiful garments referred to were priestly than bridal garments, and we are inclined to think that this is the true meaning of the text, though under both interpretations it indicates the same truth and conveys the same lesson. The promise was, if Zion awoke,—if she put on her strength,—if she resumed her place and her privileges,—if in seeking and obeying the Lord, she became the Lord's city—devoted to His service and not to idolatry—that from henceforth she should be free from the ravages of the invader and the spoiler, that she should no more be given over to the heathen to break down her defences, to tread

her streets, to profane her temple, and to desecrate her ordinances by idol worship. What a blessed promise to those smarting under the grievances of their bondage, under the loss of their privileges, under the insolence and sacrilege of their oppressors, that their oppression was come to an end, that the bulwarks of Zion and Jerusalem should be repaired, her temple and her temple worship restored, and all the privileges of her people again bestowed upon them! What a heartrending feeling to Zion's enslaved children, that the despised heathen occupied the habitations of Jerusalem, spoiled and desecrated her holy places; but now a promise was given to them that this should no more be the case, if they returned in repentance to the Lord and kept their allegiance to Him. What a motive to arouse them to the work, and to stimulate and incite them in it; faith would supply hope, and hope give energy and perseverance. They were, indeed, captives, bound and helpless, but the Lord called them. He who alone is sufficient, summoned them to the work, and in His promise and sufficiency they were encouraged to engage in it, for they had the assurance of success.

But there is another promise more gracious still, "for thus saith the Lord, 'Ye have sold yourselves for nought, and ye shall be redeemed without money.'" The Jews had sold themselves by their sins; for their transgressions and rebellions the Lord had given them over to their oppressors; and what had they gained by it? They had enjoyed their sins, and their self-will and their rebellion, but had that benefited or satisfied them? Had that repaid them for the consequences, and soothed the afflictions of their captivity? Whatever fancied good they had enjoyed by their rebellion, and their surrender of themselves to idols, all had passed away; the sweets, such as they were, were gone, and the sting alone remained; they had truly sold themselves for nought. But unprovoked, and unproductive as their rebellion and idolatry had been to them of any good, so, free and gracious was their redemption by the Lord to be, not by their providing

and paying a ransom for their liberty and restoration, not as the purchase of their own money, but by the free pleasure and mercy of God,—of His sovereign grace was He to overrule the hearts of kings and governors, and so order events in providence that they should be sent back to their country and their beloved Zion not only without ransom, but provided with all needful to their re-establishment in their political privileges and in their religious worship, that they might not be led to think, or to say, that it was by their own resources or efforts that they had been reinstated in their kingdom, so as to take the glory to themselves, but might learn that it was for their sins that the Lord had afflicted them, that He might humble them, that so for His own name's sake, and for His own glory, He delivered them and brought them back, that the praise might be His; and that they might feel as ransomed captives, be more careful to keep themselves from idolatry, and devote themselves with more entire and hearty obedience to their Lord's service.

Having thus considered the call given and the promises made in our text, we would now, as proposed, in the second place, dwell for a little on the application which may be made of it.

Jerusalem, or its inhabitants, captives in Babylon, are just a type of the natural condition of man, given over, through sin, to the power and slavery of the world and Satan, that slavery in which every individual is held by nature, and by which he is through transgression kept in bondage to the law, from which he has no power to deliver himself, but must, except for the intervention of God of His sovereign grace and love, have been left for ever under its power. Alas! my friends, how insensible are men to their miserable condition under this slavery, how little do they feel its evils, how little do they seek or desire deliverance from it! Many hug their chains, and are enamoured of their bondage, because ignorant of anything better, and unbelieving in regard to the declarations of the word of God. Many there were, doubtless, who were

with difficulty persuaded to follow Moses, and forsake the land of Egypt. Many there were who murmured by the way,—many who, amid the deprivations of the wilderness, looked back to and longed for the fleshpots of Egypt. There were many, too, who remained in Babylon after the return of the captivity,—many, probably, seduced by the idolatries and pleasures of that luxurious, but wicked nation, alike forgetful of Zion and of the God of Zion.

How much is this the case with the slaves of sin, Satan, and the world. How dead and insensible are men to their misery and their danger! Multitudes have abandoned themselves unresistingly to their fate. Multitudes are sunk in hopeless, despairing apathy. Numbers are unbelieving in regard to offers of deliverance, and fear the wilderness; numbers will abide as slaves and meet the consequences, rather than make the effort and risk the loss of the world, and incur the hostility of the world in seeking their deliverance. Multitudes love the pleasures of sin and will not leave the land of bondage, or if they set out, murmur by the way, and look back with longing desires to what they have left behind.

Oh, my friends, are any of you living in indifference to your spiritual condition, ignorant or regardless of degradation and danger through sin? Yet are you not, therefore, less in bondage to the law, and under the power of an evil heart. Your insensibility to it only proves that you are blind to the evils of your condition. You are no less captives to the power of Satan by whatever bands he leads you, whether by force or by seduction. All, by nature, are under this slavery, though many may deny the fact. And be assured that your blindness and insensibility only betoken the greater danger to your souls, in that you will not be roused to desire and seek deliverance; for the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. It is sad to live and perish as captives to sin and Satan and the world, while deliverance and liberty are offered. And the fact of your slavery, my friends, is established by the call of our text: "Awake, awake! put on

thy strength, O Zion." Why should the Lord call His people to awake, when they are in no danger from their condition and their apathy? Why put on their strength, were no enemies to be overcome, no shackles to be burst asunder, no freedom to be contended for, no battle to be fought? Oh, yes, my friends, the experience of Christians has proved that there is a deliverance to be sought, and a battle to be fought; that there are powerful enemies to be subdued and great dangers to be averted, and high privileges and glorious liberty to be won; there are ruin and death on the one hand, and victory and triumph and everlasting glory and blessedness on the other. And, though the work be the Lord's, though it is by the might of Him who is Lord of Hosts that we can alone obtain the victory, the contest is ours to encounter, the fight is ours to fight. We must shake off sleep, we must bestir ourselves to exertion, we must put on our strength,—stir up every energy, that we may fight the good fight, and gain the victory. We must put on the whole armour of God, while we give ourselves to the battle with entire devotedness, neither failing to employ our energies to the utmost, nor presumptuously trusting in ourselves, but in the grace of God. What watchfulness, my friends, do we need to exercise, for we have active and insidious as well as powerful enemies! Satan never sleeps in his hostility to Christ and his Gospel; and shall we sleep in security and carelessness while God's honor, and the Redeemer's cause, and our own souls are invaded and endangered by sin? Satan wishes nothing better than to lull men into unconcern, that he may, unresisted, lead victims blindfold to ruin. We have need to take heed to our Saviour's exhortation, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation," for our evil propensities are ever active, ever craving for indulgence; and Satan, going about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, is ever busy, strewing temptations to their indulgence in our way.

Let me beseech you, my friends, to arouse all your energies, to put on all your strength, never to think that

you may spare any sin, hold truce with any enemy of Christ, and of your souls, in any way make compliances with the world, or think lightly of any departure from the steadfastness of your allegiance, from the entireness of your obedience, from the activity of your work,—but ever seek a more entire subjection of the world, of the whole man, and of the Devil to Christ, that you may be acknowledged in the great day as having fought the good fight.

But the next lesson we are taught is, that we must seek to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and more and more with all the graces of the Christian life,—“put on thy beautiful garments.” Christians are said to be kings and priests unto God. When we take up the office, we must assume the appropriate garments—these just indicative of the sacred character of our profession, of the purity, the sincerity, the integrity, the holiness of life and conversation which we should maintain. Seeing that we have named the name of Christ, and have professed ourselves as His disciples, chosen and separated for His service, we ought sedulously to cultivate all those graces, by which we may be brought to a nearer resemblance to Jesus, may adorn His doctrine more, advance His cause more, and be better prepared for enjoying the privileges of the Heavenly Kingdom, and joining in the worship of the Heavenly Temple. Holiness is the only sure evidence of our union with Jesus, that He is in us, and hath made us dwelling-places of His Holy Spirit, and will acknowledge us as sons and daughters, fellow-heirs with Himself of the Kingdom of Heaven. What manner of persons ought we to be in all godliness, who are called with so high and holy a calling; for Jerusalem is the holy city; there is the house of God; it is the place to which all the tribes of His people resorted for the worship of their God. The uncircumcised and the unclean had no place there. Christ sanctifieth His Church with His own blood. No unsanctified one, uncircumcised in heart, can have a portion in the New Jerusalem, the Church triumphant in Heaven, for “without holiness no one can

see God," and His people are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, who shall serve Him day and night, in His Temple above.

The same truth is beautifully set forth in the other view which we took of the text,—Jerusalem as a bride prepared to meet her spouse, having lifted herself from the ground, where she had lain in humiliation and despair,—having shaken off the dust, and broken off the shackles of her captive condition, and in virgin purity, and decked out in her beautiful bridal garments, preparing to meet her beloved. The church, my friends, is the bride of the Lamb, the bride of Jesus, which He hath redeemed and sanctified to Himself, and every individual member of the true church, is, as a bride, espoused to the Lamb, ransomed for Himself, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with His own precious blood. What holiness should characterize such, those who are brought into so glorious a union? Virgin purity,—the unspotted heart,—the undivided, holy love of the soul,—the entire dedication of self to the spouse,—the absorbing of every individual desire and purpose in him who is alike the object of her highest reverence, and of her most devoted affections. Then the beautiful garments, the bridal vesture of spotless white; and, believer,—this, thy vesture, is washed white in the blood of the Lamb; it is the righteousness of Christ. And then the bridal ornaments,—the graces of the Christian character,—the graces which, in putting on of Christ, sparkle like the most precious jewels from thy person, and as a crown of glory, shall surround thy brow. But can we, my friends, find this description realized on earth? How do the professing Christians we see around us comport with it? How do we ourselves correspond with the picture? Alas! it is sadly marred and clouded as we find it exhibited in the world; traces there are of the white garment, but, alas! sadly stained by the flesh; jewels of divine origin there are sparkling here and there,—graces, which show that they are the fruit of the new

birth, that they are Christ in the soul, shining through the pollutions of the flesh,—some few brighter spirits which seem even here to realize the description of those who surround the throne on high, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands. But yet, how many short-comings deform the graces of the best. How, then, is any one to reach to such a standard, to aim at so apparently unattainable a character?

But, my friends, the standard which the Lord holds out to us must needs be perfect. It must be modelled after Himself, not according to our measure; it must be calculated to raise us upwards—not to bring Him down; to elevate the human—not to degrade the divine. And the character, too, must be attainable, if not fully in this world, at least so as to be perfected in glory. How this is possible we shall afterwards show. But in so far as needful for our comfort and our hope on earth, we must look only to the progress of this work in us, as a token and manifestation of our interest in Christ's work for us. We must not look to our holiness as the ground of our hope, not to the view which we obtain of ourselves, or of how God regards us as of ourselves, but how He regards us in Christ. Wretched, miserable sinners we may be; but if clothed with Christ's righteousness, God beholds no imperfection there—no spot, no stain in the mantle which Jesus hath thrown over and around us. All our sins and imperfections are effaced in the light of His righteousness, and Christ beams forth in every scintillation of grace from the soul, or in the life. This, my friends, is the only foundation of hope and comfort for us; in ourselves are we vile; in Christ alone are we lovely and beloved.

But, again, another exhortation is to put away all our pollutions; to rise from the ground above the low, vile grovelling things of earth, and shake ourselves from the dust, from every contaminating influence. If we are among the ransomed of the Lord, we must hate sin and the garment spotted by the flesh; we must seek to purge out every stain of pollution which attaches itself to us, to

the injury of our Christian profession ; we must remember that Christ's honor is involved in it as well as our own safety. We cannot serve Christ and the world ; there is no community between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial. If we are Christ's, my friends, and have the hope of His salvation in us, we will hold no truce with evil ; we will seek more and more to purify ourselves, even as He also is pure ; to live in the cultivation of every grace, and to keep ourselves unspotted by the world. But this work must be accomplished in the strength of the Lord.

In His strength also must we go forward to the next and last exhortation afforded by our text, to break asunder the bands of our captivity, to burst the chains which Satan and the world and the flesh would throw around us, that he may lead us captives to ruin.

The natural condition of man, under the power of evil, and of the evil one, is indeed a state of cruel bondage. His work is indeed slavish work. He serves others to his own everlasting ruin. He wears out body and soul, not only for nought, but in heaping up for himself the wrath of God, and a portion amid the fires of Hell.

Oh, my friends, break these galling fetters, which keep you all your lifetime subject to bondage, and which hinder your privileges and mar or destroy your peace of soul. Think what a blessed, what a glorious liberty you are called to—the liberty of the children of God—who serve Him, not by constraint, as a task-master, but of love, as a beloved Father in Christ ; who look not for a hire for their service, for all things are theirs, as children, and as heirs they are Christ's, and Christ is theirs and all the privileges of His Kingdom.

What can you expect from sin, my friends ? What can you look for that is good in Egypt, or in Babylon—lands of heathenism, where the true God is unknown. Ye have sold yourselves for nought," saith the Prophet ; and such, I am sure, is the unacknowledged experience of many a world-weary worlding. Often does

his soul say, "O, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest," though ignorant where he would flee to. But let him flee to Christ, and he will find rest in Him, as the ark of God,—there alone safety and peace are to be found amid the overwhelming, troubled waters of the world. Blessed be the Lord, that, amid the helplessness of man, this ark of refuge is provided for him, and, amid all his incompetency, the promise of every needful grace is given in Christ.

From the promises of our text, we may learn that God shall bring again the captivity of his people. He hath provided a free redemption for them, and the invitation is given to all to return. No money, no price is asked; the ransom is paid and liberty offered; the blessed call is given; break your chains, and come forth from your bondage; put on your strength; assert your liberty; fight, and the Lord will fight for you. Your redemption is complete, though your warfare be not yet accomplished. Your redemption is priceless to you; but, ah, what a price was paid for you. God gave His Son for you. Christ left the bosom of the Father and the glories of Heaven, dwelt as a man of sorrows on earth, and died as a malefactor on the cross, that you might be saved from Hell, and inherit everlasting life. Oh, will not such love lead you, in the confidence of faith to follow Christ, to take up every cross, to engage every enemy, to fight the good fight, to hold steadfast your allegiance to Him, to fear nothing in His cause, seeing that you enjoy the blessed promise that sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace,—that the victory shall be yours, through the Chief Captain of your salvation, and the crown and the glory too,—that you shall be kept by His Almighty power, through faith unto salvation, and be dwellers at last in the Heavenly Jerusalem, into which shall not come the uncircumcised and the unclean, but where all His people shall dwell with Christ in glory, and He shall be their everlasting portion.

SERMON XVI.

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, &c."—
Psalm xcii., 12-14.



WE have no information given us, as to when or by whom this psalm was composed. It is entitled a psalm or song for the Sabbath day, and is transmitted to us as a portion of the inspired canon of Scripture; and, as such, our text not only conveys to us the assurance of the writer, but the promise of God that the righteous shall flourish. The ungodly, in the spirit of unbelief, will deny this; they will cite it even as an evidence that the Scriptures are not the word of God, as an instance of their being contradicted by actual facts; they will point you to examples of unbelievers, whom they regard as having prospered in the world, and of believers who have been greatly afflicted and distressed; they will maintain that there is one event to the righteous and the wicked, and that it is only circumstances, or wisdom and energy in the improvement of opportunities and the use of means, which make one man prosperous and happy, while another is unsuccessful and miserable in life. But, notwithstanding this, I believe that the Psalmist gives a true statement of his experience, and that the promise it contains is a faithful promise, and one of general application. Be it observed, that neither the statement nor the promise is absolute and unrestricted. It is allowed that it must be taken in such a sense as to be reconcilable alike with the fact, and with the experience of the world, and of God's people in general,—that it cannot be opposed to the declaration of David, in another Psalm, "I have seen the wicked great in power and spreading himself like a green bay tree,"—nor to that of Job, "I have seen the foolish taking root." But these instances are brought forward expressly to show the insecu-

rity and worthlessness of the prosperity which flows not from, and is not accompanied by the blessing of the Lord ; that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. It is not denied, therefore, that the wicked may enjoy outward prosperity. But how seldom does it last? How often do the treasures of those who put their trust in them make to themselves wings and flee away? How often do the unprincipled means, by which a man has raised himself to wealth, or distinction or power, become known and spoil his fortunes and sink him in penury or disgrace? Or if his riches are not the gains of iniquity,—should they have been attained by honest industry, and persevering energy,—yet if the blessing of God hath not been sought in the acquisition or in the use of them, how soon do they fail and cease to afford enjoyment? How soon will conscience begin to suggest the disquieting thought that these things are robbing God of our hearts, and no less robbing our hearts of God ; or that even if they are enjoyed through life, that they pass away and perish with the using ; that we can neither take them with us, nor will they avail to purchase for us treasures, or a portion, for the world to come? “What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

But let us now consider the nature and conditions of the promise made to the righteous in our text, and we shall find it no unfaithful saying, that they shall flourish, and that they have no less the promise of the life that now is, than of the life that is to come. In the first place, remark, my friends, the definition or description given of the righteous—who they are. This you will find in the 13th verse, “Those that be planted in the house of the Lord.” This, although it is a figurative expression, shows that by the righteous are meant those whom God hath chosen for Himself, transplanted from the world and planted into the garden of His house, whose duty and whose privilege alike it is to worship and to serve Him continually, night and day,—who enjoy a constant near-

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ness to Him, through the services and ordinances of His worship, and in the enjoyment of the means and experience of the supplies of grace. The allusion is undoubtedly to the priests and ministers of the Temple, and the high privilege which they enjoyed in nearness and free access to God—a privilege alike to be desired and sought after by all God's people—a privilege, the blessedness of which we find David, when a persecuted fugitive from his throne and country, ardently desiring, "My soul longeth, yea fainteth for the courts of the Lord; blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; a day spent in Thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." Of His chosen people of old, God said, "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Believers are said to have been made kings and priests unto God, a royal priesthood, a holy people,—and this evidently in reference alike to the character and the privileges belonging to them. Of such our text says that they shall flourish, and the context illustrates the expression by telling us HOW they shall flourish, WHERE they shall flourish, WHEN they shall flourish, and WHY they shall flourish. Let us for a little consider these four particulars, in succession.

1st. How the righteous shall flourish. He "shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." The characteristics of these trees are very different. The former, rapid in its growth, towering above all surrounding vegetation, with its straight and stately stem, and its spreading canopy of fan-like leaves, forms a striking object in the eastern landscape, is a welcome beacon to the weary traveller through the wilderness, often indicating a stage, or resting-place on the journey, betokening sometimes the nearness of water; and not only acceptable for its shade, but, in the season of its fruit, from the promise of refreshment and sustenance which it holds out to the hungering, thirsting, way-worn wanderer of the desert. It is an apt emblem, therefore, of a flour-

ishing, prosperous condition. What more stately, more graceful, more attractive, and, at the same time more useful, could be selected to convey to us an exalted conception alike of the gracefulness and the blessedness of the Christian calling? The cedar of Lebanon is of an entirely different character; it grows along the rocky sides, and amid the wintry snows of the mountains; it attains, it is said, the vast age of a thousand years; its enormous size marks it out as the monarch of the forest; its gnarled, twisted, branches have stood the elemental war of many centuries, and are emblems of endurance. What is better suited to represent the stability and endurance of the Christian character and the Christian hope? And these together shadow forth not only the attractive graces which adorn the Christian in the day of outward prosperity, the blessings which he enjoys, and the blessedness which he diffuses, but his endurance amid the trials of life, his rising superior to all the obstacles and opposition which he encounters, and his steady progress, alike amid amid sunshine and tempest, summer's heat and winter's cold.

The character of Christians, my friends, is by no means uniform, with one unvarying type of primitive form; as in natural objects, there are infinite modifications and varieties. The restored image of God to the soul is the unchanging type of every heart renewed by grace; but this develops itself in various ways and forms, according to circumstances. Just as different is the Christian who has grown up amid outward prosperity, amid the even tenor of a life favorable to its growth, marked neither by great temptations or trials, from him who has been nursed amid hardships and sufferings and persecutions for the truth's sake, as the slender, graceful palm from the rugged, weather-beaten cedar. The former will display more ostensibly the graces and fruits of the Christian life, its more apparent and more attractive features; the other its more hidden and stern, but no less valuable qualities. Some, like the one, may tower up to Heaven, under the clear,

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sunny sky, and spread forth their leaves and bring forth their flowers and fruits with teeming luxuriance ; and many may hail them as beacons, and be encouraged and pressed forward by the sight of them and refresh themselves under the shade, and be nourished and strengthened by their fruits. Some may be, like the other—its huge trunk and its arms of strength rooted fast in the clefted rock—examples of Christian steadfastness and patient endurance, calculated to sustain and support others in the maintenance of their faith and hope, amid similar circumstances and under like trials. Or these qualities may be intermixed in various proportions, according to the circumstances in which the Christian life is nourished and developed. It is, therefore, essentially in the growth of the inward principle that the Christian flourishes. Outward circumstances are only extrinsic,—they modify the manifestation, but do not change the nature of the principle ; but the principle is calculated, nevertheless, alike to promote outward prosperity and happiness in life, and avert the calamities and afflictions. God has promised His blessing upon the right-seeking and right use of the things of this world. The worldly man, through greed of gain, and hasting to grow rich, often not only misses his object, but brings ruin upon himself. The Christian, through moderate desires, is more apt to be successful. The temperate use of all worldly good, in subordination to the will and the glory of God, is most productive of success in the pursuit, and of true enjoyment in the use of it. While under the trials and afflictions of life, nothing will lighten our burden or convert our trials into blessings, like the conviction that they are appointed by God for our welfare, and such an improvement of them, as will make us feel that they are conducive to this. The Christian will preserve many blessings which the worldly man will squander, and avoid many evils by a wise discretion, which the worldly man will rush into. And, truly, it will appear to those who look candidly upon the world, that, taking a just view of the objects of life, the prosperity of the godly

is most enduring, and their success greatest. For, if the unscrupulousness of the ungodly enables them to make gain, or to obtain advancement, under circumstances, or by means which the godly, disapproving of, will not use,—and if the former are in such cases successful in worldly objects, while the latter fail for the time,—yet, how often does the success of the wicked or worldly, through overconfidence in themselves, cause them, by recklessness and folly, to lose what they have gained? How often are their iniquitous practices brought to light, and bring them to ruin and disgrace,—and how often does a wounded conscience rob them of their enjoyment? While, on the other hand, the righteous, by patient perseverance in well-doing, reap their reward,—success at length crowns their endeavors,—the world, even while it hates, will respect them,—they will have the approbation of their own consciences, and an assurance that what they render to the Lord will be rendered back in full measure into their own bosoms—thus realizing the promise of God to His people of old,—“Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.” “Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desire of thine heart.” “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass, and He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as the noonday.” “Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him; fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth the wicked devices to pass.” “Cease from anger and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any way to do evil, for evil doers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord they shall inherit the earth.” “For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be.” “Yea, thou shalt diligently consider His place, and it shall not be but the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

The second characteristic to which the context points us is, WHERE the righteous shall flourish,—“They shall

flourish in the courts of our God." I have shown that the allusion here is to the priests who had their habitations in the temple, and whose duty and whose privilege alike it was to minister day and night in the service of the Lord.

There is no privilege, my friends, so great to the children of God as being near to Him, having free access to Him, enjoyment of His communion, and a refuge in every time of need in His help,—and this privilege they enjoy in the use of the means of grace in the house of prayer, where He has promised to manifest Himself to His own, not as He does to the world, and in the ordinances of His house, which He hath appointed alike as the channels for seeking and receiving grace,—and no less in the services of the closet, and among the twos and the threes, in the midst of whom the Lord hath promised to be, to bless them, and to do them good. We learn how David mourned bitterly over his long exclusion from the house and ordinances of God, through the troubles and persecutions in which he was involved,—that he was thus deprived of his sweetest consolations and his greatest support under his afflictions. Just as children are ever most at home in their father's house, feel that there in present and trusted sympathy, kindness and help, they find most security and most happiness,—so will the true Christian feel that his highest privileges, his chiefest joys, are to be found in the house of God,—that however he may feel that all that he does is done to God, and that wherever he is, in whatever circumstances, He is ever near him to sustain him in the doing of it,—that still it will be his delight to disengage himself as often as possible from the cares and anxieties of the world, to renew his strength at the well-springs of life and seek guidance from the Lord to direct him, amid the perplexities; sustain him under the trials, strengthen him to meet the temptations, and enable him to endure and hold fast amid the hardships and trials of the way; and more especially when deprived of such privileges,—amid outward

troubles and inward anxieties, will he look, almost with envy, upon those whose office keeps them far from the turmoil and the distracting cares of life, and whose time is devoted to holy meditation, in near communion with God, and in contemplation of the preparation for the pure and exalted enjoyments of the Holy Kingdom. And if, as we believe, the blessing of God is upon the righteous, surely this blessing will be most realized by those, who most truly and earnestly seek to live near to God, in the most diligent use of the means of grace, and devotion to the service and glory of God. Often is it the case that believers are exercised by afflictions in the providence of God—not in despite of their faith, but because of their want of faith,—because they have been seduced by prosperity, and need to be humbled,—because they have not been faithfully administering their privileges for God's glory, and He hath withdrawn them, to teach them that they are His.

God afflicteth His people because of their sins and departures from Himself,—that they may be warned and brought to repentance. Were there more simplicity of faith, more heartiness of love, more devotedness of service, a more entire honoring of God, with all that we are and have, He who afflicteth not willingly the children of men would withhold His judgments and command a blessing. Have we not numerous examples of godly, God-fearing, God-trusting people, who, because they have done it for the Lord's glory, have prospered in all they have set their hands to, thus proving the truth of the promise by the prophet Malachi, "Come prove me now if I will not open the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it?"

The persons who, in works of piety and benevolence, have had great success,—who have engaged the sympathies, called forth the labors or the liberality of others in behalf of their enterprises, have been men men of great faith and much prayer,—men who have cast themselves

wholly upon the Lord, pleading for His blessing and His agency. Perhaps there is no more striking example of this than in Muller, the founder of that most remarkable institution, the Orphan Home, near Bristol, in England an institution now providing for (if I remember aright) about twelve hundred orphan children, which was commenced on a very small scale,—the funds for the erection and support of which have been contributed, unsolicited, in answer to prayer, and which has been enlarged from time to time, not as funds permitted, but as necessity seemed to require, and, to meet the exigencies of which, supplies always came in often from sources the most unlikely and the least expected, as they were needed. Often, though never without perfect trust in the providence of God, when, without any idea where the supplies for the next day's necessities were to come from, were the funds forthcoming from some unknown and distant friend, whom the Lord had raised up for its time of need. Wilberforce, too, was remarkably a man of faith and prayer. When his affairs became embarrassed by the fault of others, and he was exhorted by friends to relieve himself by reducing his large contributions to Christian and charitable objects, he refused to do so, while the object could be attained by limiting his personal expenses, saying that there his retrenchment must begin, and that the Lord would provide for him,—and he was enabled, by his self-denial, not only to continue his charities undiminished, but to extend them,—for, ere long, his affairs were re-established on a footing of prosperity greater than before. It is, my friends, in seeking, not by profession merely, but simply and earnestly by faith, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, that other things shall be added unto us.

In the third place, the context informs us WHEN the righteous shall flourish. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." No man can escape the effects of age, the decline in strength and vigor which years necessarily bring along with them. The day of activity and enterprise is past, but the peace of the religious man will greatly

contribute to a hale and healthy old age, and to a freer enjoyment of all the blessings which providence bestows. How often do we find the worldly become peevish and fretful in old age, a burden to themselves and an annoyance to others? The want of their accustomed sources of employment, amusement, or gratification, makes them irritable and discontented. But what an alleviation of these infirmities is it, when the mind looks forward to, and is occupied with spiritual and heavenly things,—when, as the outward man perisheth, the inward man is renewed day by day,—when, as sight and sense fail and fade, faith is strengthened, and the life of faith invigorated, and the decline of life often shines to the Christian in brightest splendor, gilding, in its setting, the clouds which may have darkened and obscured its course? If there be something more fresh and lively in the character of the young Christian, like the tree in spring, in the promise of leaves and flowers, there is more maturity, more experience, more stability, more of the ripe glory of the Christian character in the aged disciple. He has run his race, and he waits with patience for the prize. He has fought the good fight and expects the crown. His journey has drawn to a close, and his home is in view. His pilgrimage is almost ended, and he seeks to enter into his rest. His account is closed with the world, and he looks to his enduring inheritance,—peace is shed abroad over his soul. He looks with complacency on all around him,—his path has been brightening more and more, and is already bursting into the full effulgence of the perfect day.

Lastly,—we are told WHY the righteous shall flourish. "They shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright." The fruit which the believer bears in old age, like that of the matured tree, is the evidence of his righteousness, of the vigor and perfecting of the life of God in his soul,—but it is no less the evidence of the Lord's faithfulness in his promises,—for in so far as he has been made to differ from others, it is the Lord who hath done it. Is he quickened from the death and tres-

passes and sins and brought to newness of life? It is in Christ that he lives. Is he brought from the power of sin to the love of holiness? It is because he is not under the law, but under grace. Is he working out his own salvation with fear and trembling? It is the Lord who works in him, alike to will and to do of his good pleasure. It is the worldly and unbelieving who deny the work of Christ, because they have no experience of it in themselves,—they have no faith to seek, and they cannot receive the fulfilment of God's promises. But, with the believer, it is otherwise,—he has taken the Lord at His word,—he hath put His promises to the test, and he feels that he has never been straitened in the Lord, but only in himself. All the light, the peace, the comfort, the strength, the faith, the hope, every privilege and every blessing which he enjoys, he feels that he has gotten from the Lord, in answer to prayer, and in accordance with His promise, and he ascribes all the praise and glory to His grace,—for it is not because of any sufficiency in himself that he is righteous, but alone by the grace of Him who hath begun a good work in him, and who will carry it on unto the day of Christ,—and the experience of the faithfulness of whose promises in the time that is past will sustain him to the end, and, in the view of death, will enable him to say, "O death where is thy sting; O grave where is thy victory."

This flourishing of the righteous, this growth in grace, in the character, in the peace and blessedness, and in all the rewards of the Christian life, is the believer's privilege,—all is promised to faith; pardon, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, are all the purchase of the blood of the God man shed upon the cross. All are provided and offered and supplied to him, of free grace,—for "believe and ye shall be saved," is the Gospel and includes all that is treasured up in Christ for His people.

It is, my friends, a sad token of the depravity of our nature, in the face of the law which condemns every man as a transgressor, that men are so unwilling to confess their

sin, and so blindly reject, and so ungratefully despise so great a salvation, the gift of such wondrous, such undeserved love,—but to the self-condemned sinner, brought to the full view of all his depravity, and of his utter helplessness, how precious the assurance that there is not only pardon in Christ Jesus for sinners, but abundance of grace too, and the promise given that the righteous, shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger! But this, as is implied in its being the privilege, is no less the desire of the Christian,—for we cannot, however it may be so in itself, esteem anything as a privilege which is not a subject of desire. He who has truly tasted that the Lord is gracious, will not be satisfied with the taste. He who has fed upon the crumbs will desire the feast. He who has seen the beauties and experienced the blessedness of holiness, will be anxious to grow in it, he will long after it and pray for it, and use every means of cultivating it,—he will dig for it as if for hidden treasures. His earnest desire will be no longer to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of his mind, so as to approve the good and perfect and acceptable will of God, so as in the contemplation and following of Jesus, to be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. He will ever sit, with delight, under the shadow of his beloved, and His fruit will be sweet to his taste.

But the righteous will feel it to be equally their duty, as their privilege, to flourish more and more. It is a command which is given to him, an exhortation which is addressed to him, for obedience to which he is responsible, and in the neglect of which he brings upon himself an awful condemnation. Think not, my friends, that you are to be mere passive recipients of grace,—you are to be workers together with Christ. There is no promise made that they who do not ask shall receive,—that they who do not seek shall find, or that it shall be opened to those who do not knock. Be assured, if Christ be working in us, He will be working by us,—that a work will be

carrying forward by those in whom a work of grace is going on,—that a true faith will bring forth fruits. We know that our hearts have been changed into the love of Christ, by the earnest desire to keep His commandments and to fulfil all His pleasure.

Oh, my friends, do no delude yourselves by fancying that you can have an interest in Christ, if you are indifferent about His will and careless of His glory. The good tree will bring forth good fruit,—the earnest Christian will strive to grow in grace, and to abound more and more in the fruits of it to the end,—for the humble, anxious believer will never think that he has already attained, or is already perfect,—but, forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before, will be pressing ever forward. In setting the Lord Jesus before him, as the pattern and example of his life and conversation, he will feel the distance at which he must ever follow, the attainments he must still make in aiming at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; but he will be anxious, at the same time, like the Psalmist, to give the testimony of his experience,—that the righteous shall flourish by the grace of God, flourish like the palm tree, grow like the cedars in Lebanon,—that those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God, and that they shall flourish and bring forth fruit in old age, and that “they shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright.” Whatever others may say, he will show forth his own experience of the Lord’s faithfulness, to commend Him to those who would seek a dependence and a trust which will not fail them;—he will declare for the encouragement of others,—“Much as I have tried Him, I never trusted in Him in vain,—often as I have sought Him, He never failed me,—in serving Him, I never served Him for nought,—I never put my trust in Him, and was disappointed.” Such was the experience of David,—such has been that of men of God in all ages of the Church, such the testimony they bear. Only prove Him, my friends, and the same experience will be yours.

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SERMON XVII.

"Put ye in the sickle," &c.—Joel III., 13.



WHAT a wonderful manifestation of the power, faithfulness, goodness, and wisdom of God, is exhibited in the germinating, growth, and maturing of the fruits of the earth. The grain is cast into the ground,—buried and out of sight, it is, for a time, apparently lost,—nothing is seen to give the hope of reward for the cost and labor which the husbandman has expended on it; for that which he soweth is not quickened except it die, and the husbandman must wait in faith, and have long patience, until he receive the early and the latter rain. After a time, the tender blade begins to appear through the mellow earth, and the field assumes its livery of green, and cheers the hopes of the husbandman by its luxuriant richness. But soon a change comes,—the nipping frosts of winter bind fast all nature in their iron grasp. The sun no longer, by its genial warmth, draws up the nutritive juices of the earth for the sustenance of herbs and trees; the earth puts on her shroud of snow, as if mourning over languishing and dying nature. Yet is it but a suspension of life,—not death. When winter has passed away, and spring, with its genial warmth, returns, all again revives, quickens into new life, an emblem of the resurrection morn, when that which is sown in corruption shall be raised in incorruption, and when this mortal shall put on immortality. The plant quickly grows under the fostering sun of summer; first, the ear appears, and then the full corn in the ear, and at length the fields whiten to the harvest, and invite the reaper to put in the sickle and fill his hand, and him that bindeth the sheaves, his bosom. It is possible that the husbandman may not recognize the hand of God in all this process, that he may look merely to the sun and the rains and

to his own labor and experience, as the efficient causes of the operation. But, nevertheless, these are but the means and instrumentalities in the hands of Him who worketh all in all,—who is alike the God of creation and of providence,—who called all things into existence by His word,—who sustains them in being by His power, and orders all their changes, in accordance with and to work out the purposes of His overruling and sovereign will. And, surely, it becomes us, my friends, to acknowledge the hand of God in these things, to accustom ourselves to look to Him as alike the great first cause and ruler of all, that we may live under a constant impression of His presence, sense of our dependence upon Him, grateful recognition of his goodness, and earnest purpose and desire to dedicate all our blessings and privileges to the service and glory of Him, from whose bounty and undeserved grace we derive them.

In this beautiful process, let us mark the power of God. The surrounding multitude were struck with wonder and with awe when Jesus multiplied a few loaves and fishes into a provision for thousands; but was this act, in reality, more wonderful,—did it manifest a greater amount of power than the processes, more familiar to us and more gradual, though not better understood, by which He provides for the wants of every living creature which inhabits our globe? One miraculous act provided an ample meal for five thousand men, besides women and children, from the inadequate supply which His disciples had along with them,—but a continuous manifestation of divine power is exhibited in the order of nature, though concealed behind natural causes, which derive their efficacy alone from the all-pervading operation of God. The difference is, that in the one case, God operates through the medium of the usual order, or what we denominate the laws of nature; in the other, by an apparent infraction or setting aside of these laws. The former we are accustomed to regard as natural, because we attribute to certain facts in nature, as the soil, the genial rain, the sun's heat, the producing of

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certain results, as the germinating, the growth, the maturing of plants, and they strike us with less wonder because they are usual or of common occurrence. The latter are contrary to the usual order, and, therefore, more readily regarded as supernatural or miraculous.

But the above process, moreover, evinces the truth and the faithfulness of God. After the flood had destroyed the earth and every living creature, except what was saved with Noah and his family in the Ark, every cloud for a time would create alarm and anxiety on the part of the survivors, lest it might indicate a renewal of the awful calamity. But, for their assurance and to allay their apprehensions, God gave the promise—"I will not again smite any more every living thing, as I have done; while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." And He gave the bow in the cloud as a pledge of His faithfulness, and every returning harvest, when the reapers put in the sickle, an evidence is afforded of the truth and faithfulness of God, and an assurance that, in relying upon His word, He will not fail us.

Again, we behold the goodness of God exhibited in the producing and maturing of the fruits of the earth. How universal is the beneficence of the great Creator,—how abundantly are the wants of every living creature provided for, and how great the beneficence, my friends, of our Heavenly Father, who, amid all the ingratitude and all the misimprovement or abuse of His mercies, which men manifest, yet makes His sun to shine and His rain to fall, to cause the earth to yield her increase, even for the evil and unthankful. How apt are men, even in the enjoyment of His gifts, to forget Him who bestows them,—to love and serve and trust in the creature, rather than in the Creator, and use the bounties of providence, rather to please themselves and gratify their own lusts, than glorify God with them. Were God to deal with us after our deserts, how different would it be with us? Well might He make the heavens over us brass and the earth

iron, and turn fruitful lands to barrenness, cause cleanness of teeth throughout our dwellings, and fill the earth with distress and lamentation, till men should acknowledge that He is the Lord.

But, by the harvest, we are taught the wisdom as well as the power, faithfulness, and goodness of the Lord. In making provision for the wants and comfort of men, He does not leave them to inactivity and indolence, He does not make them abjectly dependent upon what is done for them; but while He teaches them that all their mercies are the result of His undeserved grace and goodness,—that while we cannot enjoy them independently of Him, so neither can we enjoy them without those means which He requires us to use, and those efforts which He requires us to make, for the acquisition of them. Though there is a part that God only can effect, there is a part which He requires us to do,—and the neglect of this by us will be as fatal as would be the withholding of God's working. We cannot form the soil, but we must cultivate it,—we cannot produce the seed, but we must sow it,—we cannot ripen the harvest, but we must reap it and prepare it for use. What God gives that we gather, and gather it as He enables us to do so.

But, my friends, there is a far more important harvest typified by that of which we have been speaking,—there is a seed of far more consequence to be sown than that which the husbandman sows,—a soil far more important to be cultivated than the soil which he labors, and fruits far more essential to be produced and gathered than those which conduce to the support of the body. The human heart, and the world also, are often represented in Scripture under the image of a field to be cultivated, and the word of God is spoken of as the good seed, and the ministers of the word as the husbandmen, and as the reapers of the harvest. It is their part to prepare the soil, and to sow the seed, and to cultivate the ground, and to gather in the harvest. But though a Paul may plant, and an Apollos water, it is God alone who giveth the increase.

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And as there is a time in the natural harvest when the sickle is to be put in,—so there are seasons in the experience of the Church,—when multitudes are, in a peculiar manner, ripening for the harvest, and when it becomes the ministers and people of God to be peculiarly on the alert, and to put in the sickle when the season favors,—for while the word is spoken of elsewhere as the good seed, in our text it seems regarded rather as the instrumentality used for converting and gathering in sinners, as ripe fruits into the garner of the Lord. The urging by the Prophet of the putting in of the sickle, because the harvest is ripe, seems to point at the necessity of using suitable opportunities which occur in the providence of God, for giving heed to and for preaching and pressing home the word with peculiar urgency and power, that perishing sinners may be awakened, brought to Christ, and saved, for this is the great work and the great end of the Gospel dispensation. The final gathering in of the redeemed will be by the angels of God, in that day when the Lord shall pronounce the doom of each, and when, while the wicked shall be cast into Hell, and all they that forget God, the righteous, gathered from the four winds of Heaven, shall go into life eternal.

In harmony with this view are the words of Jesus—
“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into his harvest.” It was also in reference to a favorable opportunity of preaching the Gospel to the Samaritans, who, on the report of the woman, “Come, see a man which told me all things whatsoever I have done; is not this the Christ?” were gathering together in crowds to hear Him preach and to witness His miracles, that our Lord said—“Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest.” But, my friends, what is the gathering in of the fruits of the earth in comparison with the sowing of souls? If it be a matter of so great anxiety and concern to improve the proper season and the offered opportunity for securing the

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harvest treasures, that provision may be made for the body, and for its support and comfort during this uncertain and fleeting life, of what infinitely greater moment is it to take advantage of every favorable occasion for warning sinners of their sin and danger, and of urging them to lay hold of offered mercy? When once the grain is fully ripe, and is liable to be destroyed if not at once reaped and secured, men will make every sacrifice and every effort, and endure fatigue, and forego other work, that they may attend to this pressing matter. But, alas! how careless are men about their souls when in danger of eternal ruin,—how will they risk their safety for every passing pleasure or interest of the world! And if men are thus regardless of their own souls, it is not to be wondered at that there should be so much coldness and unconcern about the souls of others,—that they should look so indifferently upon the multitudes hurrying along the broad way to ruin,—that they should raise so feeble a voice of warning and, show so little zeal, and make so little effort in the cause of Christ. Through a spirit of selfishness, men are even apt, in the enjoyment of their own privileges, to forget that they have a responsibility in regard to their fellow-men,—that as they have received, whether it be in things temporal or spiritual, they are bound to do good and to communicate, more especially in regard to those things, the communication of which to others will enrich their own souls,—for the more we kindle the true light in the minds of others the more will its enlivening and cheering influence be reflected back unto our own souls. Now, there are various occasions and circumstances which may peculiarly call for the putting in of the spiritual sickle for the gathering in of souls to Christ, various indications of the fields of the Lord's husbandry being white to the harvest.

How much encouragement, my friends, does the contemplation of the power, faithfulness, goodness and wisdom of God, as exhibited in the maturing and ingathering of the fruits of the earth, afford us to watch the signs

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of the times and put in the sickle in due season, to use promptly and diligently and perseveringly the means of grace, whether in reference to ourselves individually, or our fellow-men generally, and to improve every favorable opportunity of winning souls to Christ, and gathering them in to the garner of the Lord? All alike testify that the work shall not be in vain. His power assures us that nothing can counteract his purposes, and that His command to put in the sickle is equivalent to a promise that, in doing so, we shall not fail to reap a harvest. The evidence of His faithfulness in the return of the seasons is a pledge that we may confide no less implicitly in the truth of His promises in regard to the spiritual harvest, and in the assurance that He hath reserved a seed unto Himself, and that the grace shall not be withheld which is needed for the bringing about of the promised object. God cannot deny Himself. No less does His goodness in providence assure us of His grace,—that, as He who is the God of nature causes His sun to shine and His rain to fall, even for the wicked and unthankful,—so He who is the God of grace hath caused the Son of righteousness to shine, and the showers of His grace to descend, not for those who deserved these blessings, but for the recovery and salvation of a sin-darkened and guilty world. Jesus, our Lord, came into the world not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, and that grace might be freely offered to and bestowed upon all who, realizing their need, would receive it as it is offered.

The wisdom of God is evidenced no less in the dispensation of grace than in the provisions of nature. Privileges are inseparably associated with character. "Without holiness no man can see God." Progress is connected with effort and diligence. We must work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and exercise perseverance,—for they who are steadfast and endure unto the end alone shall be saved. The grace of God gives no ground for licentiousness. Though we are

saved by grace, we are saved by faith,—and this faith, the Gift of God, works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. Neither does the necessity of God's work dispense with the necessity of our work, for He works not only in us, but by us,—and our work, in working the will of God is just the fruit of the Spirit's operation.

But let us proceed to consider some of the special calls which are given to put in the sickle, because indicative of the field's being white, or ready for the harvest.

I may mention, in the first place, times of high privileges. It is true, the duty in regard to these is too little realized, and men are apt to forget that "to whom much is given, of them also will much be required." They are apt to think of seasons of prosperity and success, at least in religious matters, as times when they may relax a little in their watchfulness or exertion. They are ready to persuade themselves that no dangers threaten, and that they are strong,—and Satan is thus very often successful in throwing them off their guard, and preparing their fall.

Now, my friends, are we in no danger, through our great privileges, of being lulled into security about our own souls, or into a withholding of effort in regard to the conversion and salvation of others? Even amid the great light and advantages which we enjoy, are there not multitudes among and around us perishing in sin, and even perishing from lack of instruction and exhortation,—and should not the thought of this lead us to look carefully to ourselves, how we are caring for our own spiritual interests, and for those of our neighbors and our fellow-men,—and how in respect of these things we shall be able to render our account in the great day, of the improvement which we have made of our talents? Is there no reason to fear that just because we have the Scriptures widely and freely circulated, ordinances regularly dispensed, a general profession of religion among us, and perfect freedom in religious matters, every one being at liberty to

read the Word for himself, make his own interpretation of it, and worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, none daring to make him afraid,—that, just on this account, many are apt to fancy that all is going on well as it is,—that they may leave things to their natural course,—that there is no need for special watchfulness, effort or exertion, or for special anxiety,—that the means of grace are always open, if an effort requires to be made,—that the necessary machinery is in operation for the accomplishment of God's purposes, without their interference or individual aid being needed? Is there no fear that such feelings hinder greatly the progress of the life of Christ in the soul, exercise a restraint alike over the contributions, the efforts, and the prayers of Christ's people in behalf of the cause? It is generally when dangers are most apparent, and difficulties most abound, that individual Christians, as well as the Church, are most awake to their duty, and efforts are most freely and heartily put forth. In prosperity, when all seems calm and smooth and hopeful, men are most ready to lie upon their oars and take their ease. But, surely, this ought not to be so. We should be on our guard against this snare of the evil one. We should remember that though the time of trial is a time when men require to exert themselves, in order to hold fast to the consistency of their profession, that they be not driven from their steadfastness by fear of consequences,—that prosperous occasions and circumstances no less call for effort, in order to the making of more effectual progress in the work. The mariner would show great folly who only aroused himself to exertion when tempests raged and dangers were pressing, and sank into carelessness, when propitious skies and favoring gales were ready to prosper his voyage. Then, my friends, is peculiarly the time for working, spreading every sail and using every appliance, and making the most of every advantage. It is a common proverb, no less applicable to religious than to temporal affairs, that men should make hay while the sun shines; the Church and Christians, individually,

should be on the alert to use and improve every favourable opportunity for putting in the sickle, for urging on the work most zealously, while it may be done most advantageously. Seasons, when all in our outward circumstances is going well with us,—when most free from worldly care and anxiety,—when youth and health give vigor to body and mind,—when we can do the work most effectually,—such seasons should be improved to promote the interests of our souls, and to lay up against a time of need those treasures which alone can profit us when health declines, and the world fails, and sorrows come upon us, and disturb, distract, or impair our faculties and weaken our efforts.

In no country, in no period of the world were the opportunities ever more favorable, the means more attainable, and the call louder for the Church, and for every professing Christian to put his hand energetically to the work of building up the cause of Christ, and promoting the evangelization of the world. The whole world is truly, in a most emphatical manner, white unto the harvest, and ready for the putting in of the sickle. From the north, south, east and west, the cry is, "Come over and help us,"—"Send us the Word of life,"—"Send us missionaries of the Cross,"—"Preach the Gospel to us." Surely, the earnest cries of multitudes who have hitherto been sunk in heathenism, or involved amid the mists of superstition, for the Gospel,—should put to shame the indifference to the Word and ordinances of God, of multitudes among us, who have these provided to their hand, and urged upon their acceptance, and who yet live so much in neglect of them. To have a true revival of religion, it must begin in our own hearts,—mere impulses from external motives will soon fail and become fruitless,—it is the living principle within the hearts of believers that alone will sustain the zeal of the Church. Let every one see that he is in earnest in cultivating the spiritual life in his own soul, and faithful in improving his own opportunities, and fulfilling his own responsibilities

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to God and his fellow-men,—and thus will he alike abound himself, and stimulate others to abound in prayers and efforts. Let all be earnest, therefore, to seize present opportunities, and let their zeal be encouraged by the prospects of success in the work. Let it not be our sin that we have not obeyed the call of the Lord,—that we have not entered into the work prepared for, and the privileges laid open to us. Let us not be slack to go up and take possession of the lands for Christ, which are stretching out their hands to welcome his ambassadors, and to receive himself. If we do not use our present advantages, they may be withdrawn,—and, though God's purposes shall not fail, we may lose the honor and the reward of being instruments in their accomplishment. Others may enter upon the work in our room. Now is our accepted time,—“Whatsoever, therefore, thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work nor device nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.”

True, my friends, there may be trials and dangers and worldly losses in the coming contest, days of bitter and cruel conflict, but there will be days of glorious triumphs too for the people of God. There will be trials in which many shall wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, that they may be prepared to walk with Jesus in white in His Kingdom of glory.

But, again, times of judgment are times which are favourable for putting in the sickle. God indeed sends His judgments often to cut down those that are ripe for destruction,—but He sends them no less to warn, arouse, and turn the wicked to Himself, that He may prepare them for mercy. The wickedness and the unbelief of men lead them to regard the judgments of God with terror and dismay,—but the Lord often deals most in mercy with His own when He afflicts them, purifies them through trials, and prepares them for the crown in bearing the Cross. And so, when judgments are abroad through the earth, the Lord is calling upon men to learn right-

eousness. "At what instant," He says, "I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil I will repent of the evil I thought to do unto them." While clouds seem to gather round ourselves, should we not take heed to ourselves to improve the day of our merciful visitation, and wherein we have sinned, turn unto the Lord in repentance, while yet His anger is kindled but a little? While He is afflicting us for our good, and not for our destruction, and while storms and convulsions are brooding over or desolating many lands, should not our prayers and our efforts be that they should be overruled to break down and overthrow the strongholds of ignorance, of idolatry, of superstition, and of ungodliness, and that the Word may be circulated, and the Gospel preached, and every instrumentality by which a religious and moral influence may be exerted, be promoted,—that knowledge may take the place of ignorance, light of darkness, pure religion of superstition, and godliness of ungodliness? Is it not the case now, my friends, that old systems are crumbling down,—that old prejudices are being dissipated,—that tyranny and oppression are being rendered powerless,—that old shackles are being wrenched off, and that a growing longing after the light of truth and liberty of conscience is springing up? And is it not the duty and the privilege of the Church and people of God to hold forth the light, to spread the Gospel, to fill the lands, which are opening to the truth, with Bibles, and to supply the churches with the means of grace,—that the felt want may be supplied, and the cravings of men's hearts satisfied with good, and that the social tumults and civil commotions, the wars and bloodshed which have been and are devastating the nations, and producing such individual as well as general wretchedness and misery, may not be in vain, but may be a means of doing away with many existing evils, and preparing the way for better times and happier influences,—when a regenerate world

shall turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and shall not learn the art of war any more?

But we come to considerations more personal. Those things which indicate or call upon us, individually, to think of death, and how near it may be to us, afford opportunities and motives to put in the sickle, as seasons favorable for the gathering in of souls to Christ. Whatever may be the fate of nations, we know, my friends, what is our own destiny, high and low, rich and poor, young and old. It is appointed unto all men once to die, and, after death is the judgment. Our great duty, therefore, towards ourselves, is to be preparing for our great change, and towards others, that we may be warning them to be up and doing, to work while the day lasts, "seeing that the night cometh, when no man can work,"—and seasons of sickness or of so called accidents, the approach of death, and the suffering of bereavements, will be found times when the heart is impressible, and more open to instruction, warning and exhortation. A word in season, fitly spoken, on such occasions, may prove an arrow of conviction which cannot be drawn out, and which may be the instrument in the hand of God of changing the heart, and of bringing the whole man into conformity with His will. You need not despair, either of yourselves or of others, however guilty, however hardened in sin. No heart is impervious to the grace of God,—but then no time is to be lost, for sin is ever doing its work, if unresisted. While a man is not doing the Lord's work, he is doing the Devil's work,—if he be not in the way of life, he must be going forward in the way to ruin,—if he be not preparing for Heaven, he is ripening for Hell. But we cannot always judge of the state of others by outward appearances. The grossest sinners in the eyes of men may not be the greatest sinners in the eyes of God. A formal worldling, or a deceitful hypocrite may, with all his outward decency and correctness, be more hardened in sin, through resistance to knowledge,

and warnings, than those who are more outwardly vicious, because of the circumstances of temptation to which they have been exposed ; and there may be more hope of a thoughtless profligate than of a seared hypocrite, or a hardened formalist,—the latter, hardened through wilful sin, are less open to conviction,—the others, who may have been hurried along inconsiderately or recklessly in sin, are often arrested in their career of folly by some dispensation of judgment, or of mercy, and brought to see their guilt, and in repentance to seek the Saviour.

We have need, my friends, alike to watch for our own souls, the souls of our children, and our households, the souls of our relatives and friends, and the souls of all over whom we may exercise an influence, and to seize every favorable occasion of resisting evil and of fostering good impressions,—of making them feel their need of a Saviour, of commending Christ to them, and of improving warnings to the faithful,—that putting in the sickle at the favorable occasion, a harvest of souls may be gathered in to the Lord, and He may be glorified. Would we see, my friends, the work among ourselves, which the Lord has been so manifestly working in other portions of His vineyard, we must watch our opportunity and put in the sickle,—we must diligently improve and diligently apply every means of grace. And while we look to the Lord to fulfil our desires, we must, in the assurance that our labors shall not be in vain in the Lord, work while it is day, and neither faint or grow weary ; for soon the night may come when no man can work,—and we shall have to complain the “harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

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SERMON XVIII.

"God is love"—1 John iv. 8.



LOVE is an essential attribute of God, and not only so, but it is His most distinctive characteristic ; therefore, it is said by the sacred writer, that God is love—as if it were the very essence of His nature. In one sense, He is equally glorious in all His attributes ; yet is it nowhere said in Scripture, that God is Justice, or Holiness, or Truth. He is frequently called "God of Holiness," "God of Truth," but nowhere that I am aware of, is He emphatically said to be Holiness or Truth, while it is twice repeated by the Apostle John, "that God is Love." And surely the works of creation, the arrangements of providence, and the dispensation of grace, harmoniously and loudly proclaim the truth, "that God is Love." Where can we cast our eye over the wide range of creation, within our survey, that we do not find ample and unequivocal evidences of this fact displayed ? It is manifest in the condition of every creature which God hath formed, from man, the highest in the rank of beings, which inhabit the earth, down to the very lowest in which the mere pulse of life seems to beat. The minutest insect, which the microscope discloses to our view, exhibits instinctive happiness in all its movements, and the most wonderful harmony and beauty in every part, and adaptation to the wants and circumstances of its condition. Who can mark the wayward flight of the resplendent butterfly, floating along amid the summer sunshine, or sipping its food from every honied flower ; or the more steady purpose of the busy, persevering bee ; or of the little provident ant, gathering its winter stores with unceasing industry and activity, and not feel that each derives delight and enjoyment from the simple exercise of those powers and instincts

with which a benevolent Creator hath invested it? Who can observe the playful frolics of the young lambs, when genial spring hath softened the air and spread the plain with herbs and flowers; or see the liberated horse snuff the fresh air, and bound over the wide pastures; or behold the mottled fish dart through the clear and flashing stream; or the birds cleaving the air on rapid wing, and soaring aloft through the blue heavens, or chirping their simple lays amid the leafy groves, singing aloud their Creator's praise; and not acknowledge that infinite love hath ordained and inspired into His creatures this universal song of joy?

Still more, however, is the love of the Creator to be observed in the circumstances and condition of man. God formed him at first after His own image, with powers and faculties, and privileges far exalted above His other creatures, fitting him to enjoy the privilege of direct communication with Himself; and at last to become a partaker of His glory, and an inhabitant of His own eternal dwelling place. What noble sources of knowledge and research, are opened up through the powers of His intellect, not limited to the objects and duration of this passing scene, but embracing even the nature and attributes of the Most High, and stretching forward towards the regions of eternity! What refined enjoyments are the sympathies and affections of man's nature capable of affording him; how sweet the various ties which endear his family and social relations; and how wonderfully does everything in the world—the whole system of creation and providence—seem adapted to promote the improvement, comfort and happiness of the creature, while it advances the glory of the Creator! How sad to think all the fair prospects which might have been expected to flow from the Creator's love, thus diffused over all His works, should have been so marred and blighted by the folly, the ingratitude and the sin of man, the subject of such high privileges, and the object of such love. Yet the ingratitude of man

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did not, could not quench the love of God. Nay, it only served to display it in clearer and more striking colors, and give it a deeper impulse and a lovelier manifestation; for no sooner had man fallen by transgression, than the Divine goodness sought his deliverance and restoration; no sooner was judgment come upon all men to condemnation by the terms of the original covenant, than the love of God appeared in making known a covenant of grace, and the promise was made, that in due time the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent; and in the whole progress of the dispensation, and at every step and in every stage of it, the love of God to a fallen, rebellious, helpless world, was manifested in long-suffering, patience, forbearance and tenderness, till at last God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him, might be saved. We find the deep irreconcilable hatred of God on account of sin, in the strong expression of the sacred writer in referring to the corruption and sinfulness of the whole human race—"and it repented Him that He had made man upon the earth;" but notwithstanding that He might justly have left man to inherit the consequences of his rebellion and ingratitude,—nay, that He was bound by His Holiness to vindicate His law, which pronounces the sentence—"the soul that sinneth, it shall die;" yet "God is love," and love beheld the fallen and the guilty with compassion—rebellious and perverse as they were, and love conceived the wondrous plan by which God's justice might be vindicated, and sinners saved. But let us consider these things a little more in detail.

The condition of man was lost and helpless under the sentence of sin. The law which pronounced the sentence, was inexorable, and must in every iota be fulfilled; there was no escape from it; the truth and holiness of God, were pledged for its fulfilment; and man could of himself make no atonement for his sins. Good works for the future were out of the question as a pro-

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pitation; the whole service of the creature is due to God—could we obey in all things, we would be, at best, but unprofitable servants to Him, to whom the whole service of our hearts and lives is due. But the indwelling corruption of our natures, makes this, even for the future, impossible; there is none that doeth good—no, not one; the thoughts of the mind, and the imaginations of the heart, are, by nature, only evil continually; and in all things we fall short of our duty to God. Neither is repentance more availing. Repentance cannot wash out the stain, or blot out the sentence of sin committed, and even our repentance needeth to be repented of. Still less can the immolation of victims upon the altar, take away sin—the blood of bulls and of goats, could of themselves have no efficacy. The dedicating of our wealth and our possessions to his service, to the propitiating of God, could be of no use. Neither penances, nor pilgrimages, nor the sacrifice of our bodies, could anything profit; there was no way of reconciliation for sinful men, to their injured and Sovereign Lord, which they could devise or accomplish. But God, against whom in all our offences we had sinned, and to whom alone we are responsible, is Love, and love yearned over His lost and helpless creatures, and sought their recovery and restoration. But, however much He might compassionate the state and condition of a ruined world, and grieve over all the wretchedness and misery which existed there, He could not forget that men were sinners, rebellious contempters of His Sovereign Majesty,—resisters of His will, and ungrateful despisers of His goodness.

Oh, my friends, what a fearful thing is sin against God—the creature rising in opposition against his Creator—disregarding and dishonoring the Holy Majesty of Heaven—the being in whom he lives and moves, and who can not only kill the body, but destroy the soul in hell fire! What daring presumption does *sia* imply, on the part of creatures, and what folly too; what distrust of God's wisdom, truth and faithfulness; what an insult to His holi-

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the foundation of all their hopes? And what an en-
hancement of the love of God, is it, that while we were
yet sinners, Christ died for us? When we were enemies,
we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.
This, indeed, is love, not that we loved God, but that He
loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our
sins. So it is, my friends, still ; God has to make His
way to the heart, through a host of opposing enemies.
It is enlisted in the cause of Satan ; it is given over to
him, in blind but willing obedience, and is occupied by
his allies, and these must all be subdued and expelled
before the heart can be captivated and given to the Lord.
And, indeed, this is no hard thing for the Lord to ac-
complish, when He so wills it. He has but to command,
and the power of Satan shall be vanquished, and the
legion of his allies cast out, and the heart purified, and
His own supremacy established. But how condescen-
ding in the Great Jehovah—the all glorious God of
Heaven, to whom angels and archangels minister, and
whose praises they celebrate, thus to concern Himself
about ungrateful, vile, and rebellious creatures of earth,
that He should not only endure them as monuments of
His mercy, but that He should address them in the terms
of love,—that he should warn them and exhort them,
and entreat them to re-ent of their sins, and come unto
Him,—that they may be saved, and become the monu-
ments of His redeeming love !

A man may do much for his friends, but seldom will
he do any thing for his enemies. “Scarcely for a right-
eous man, will one die. Yet, peradventure for a good
man, some would even dare to die ; but God commen-
deth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sin-
ners, Christ died for us.”

But this brings us, next, to consider the love of God,
not only in compassionating lost and helpless creatures,
and by His doing so, when in a state of opposition and

alienation of heart to Him, perversely and wilfully going forward in sin, saying in their hearts, "we will not have God to reign over us,—we care not for His wrath,—we seek not His favor;" for this, my friends, is truly the state of every one who is going on in willing sin,—to consider, I say, not only the love of God in these things, but in the means by which He hath wrought out the glorious and blessed work of man's salvation.

Christ, my friends, died for this purpose, that He might save sinners. "This," saith the apostle Paul to Timothy, "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" and who is this Christ? He is the Eternal Son of God, the only Begotten, the Beloved of the Father,—one in substance, equal in power and glory, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being formed in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death—even the death of the cross. Oh, what a wondrous mystery is involved in this,—and how unspeakably does it magnify the love and grace of God. Does an earthly parent love his only born, his dear son, who has ever been a source of comfort and joy to him, above all earthly goods? Do his afflictions and distresses make his own heart bleed,—does his danger make him tremble with his anxiety,—would he freely expose his own life to protect him from harm,—will he mourn at being separated from him, and bitterly grieve should he in any way be exposed in the discharge of his duties, to hardship, to suffering, or to persecution? All this gives us but a feeble representation of what the Father of mercies sacrificed in sending the Son of His love, to humiliation, to suffering, to persecution, and to death, that He might save sinners. The ties of an earthly parent to his son can but feebly shadow forth the union to the Father, of Him who dwelt from all eternity in His bosom; but in proportion as the nature and character of

God the Father and God the Son, are exalted above those of any earthly parents, even so great proportionally is the sacrifice which God made in sending forth His Son to suffer in His mission of love and mercy. Christ is called the unspeakable gift of God, because no language of man can adequately express its value, not only in regard to its preciousness to those on whom it was bestowed, but in the sight of Him who gave it. And was there ever any sorrow like unto His sorrow? Truly was He emphatically a man of sorrows. Behold the contrast between His condition when in the bosom of the Father, and His condition on earth, where He had not a place where to lay His head,—between the honored and the worshipped of the angels of Heaven, and the despised and rejected of men,—between the Lord of Glory and the babe of Bethlehem, and the sufferer on Calvary,—between the beloved in the enjoyment of the Father's presence and countenance, and Him, who while about to pour out His soul unto death, cried out "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken me,"—between Him who shall be judge of the quick and the dead, and Him who was mocked and scourged, and insulted before the judgment seat of Pilate, and crucified as a malefactor, upon the accursed tree,—between Him who shall receive the Hallelujahs of saints and angels, singing "glory to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever," and Him in regard to whom the Jews cried out with fiendish eagerness, "crucify Him! crucify Him!" Think of all this, and say was ever humiliation like to His humiliation,—was ever sorrow like unto His sorrow; and how does all this display the amazing love of the Father to blinded, perishing rebels, and the love of the Son in submitting to the endurance of such a death, for their deliverance. Well, my friends, may this demonstrate to us that "God is love."

The love of God is also manifest in this, that Christ died for all who will come, and is an efficient Saviour to all such. The offers of salvation are made to all, even to the chief of sinners, and made freely. God desireth

not the death of a sinner, but that he should turn from his wickedness and live. The offers of salvation are free, without money and without price. The ransom is paid, none who come to God through Jesus, shall in any wise be cast out. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "The Spirit and the Bride say come, and let him that is athirst come, and take of the water of life freely." Poor, helpless sinner, you need to bring nothing with you, all is provided for you, by the free grace and love of the Father. Go to Jesus, and you will find what you need—all fulness is treasured up in Him, and there is no condemnation to them who believe on and receive Him, as He is freely offered. The Father hath given Him those whom He hath chosen, and none shall by any means pluck them out of His hand.

We need not ask ourselves if we are called. All are invited to come. Let us go and appropriate and claim the promise, and we shall be accepted. Let us go and lay the burden of our sins on Jesus, the Lamb of atonement, and by the pledged faith of the Lord, they shall no more appear against us. Our condemnation is then transferred to our surety, even to Him who tasted of death for every one of His redeemed people, for He was delivered for their offences,—He was bruised for their iniquities, the chastisement of their peace was laid upon Him, and by His stripes they are healed.

Oh, how do the freeness, the fulness, the unfailing sufficiency of His great salvation commend the love of God towards us, and make the awakened sinner to respond with heartfelt cordiality, to the utterance of the Apostle, that "God is love!"

The love of God is moreover exhibited in this, that Jesus is not only a dead, but a risen,—not only a crucified, but an exalted Redeemer. As he died for our sins, so He rose again for our justification; and in that He liveth, we have assurance that we shall live also; that, our lives being hid with God in Christ, when He, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory.

We know that our Redeemer liveth ; that He loved His own unto the death, and that He loves them still,—that He is their advocate and intercessor, at a throne of grace,—that exalted on high, He has a fellow feeling of our infirmities, knowing our frame, and remembering that we are but dust,—that He is gone before to prepare the mansions of His Father's house, for the reception of His own to everlasting blessedness, where they shall for ever dwell in glory with the Lord.

Oh, my friends, surely "God is love," when ungrateful, rebellious sinners are called to such a blessed hope.

The gift of the Spirit proves and illustrates the love of God. Oh, what a cheering, blessed promise is this—"I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you."

Oh, what a fulness and what a tenderness of love is here,—what a gracious and condescending interest,—what a lively and abiding concern does it imply on the part of the Father for His unworthy creatures ! There is no relaxation, no cessation in the love of God ; the Spirit is a living and convincing witness that He is ever near to His people ; for the Spirit dwelleth in them and witnesseth with their Spirits, that He hath made them children by the Spirit of adoption, which He hath given to them, and whereby they cry Abba Father. Truly, my friends, is the love of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, most wondrously united in the work of man's redemption. The Father in His love, sent forth and commissioned none other than His only, His dear son, to bear the burden of our sins, and reconcile us to God. The Son willingly undertook the commission. He assumed man's nature ; He suffered as never man suffered, and laid down His life of Himself, for He had power to lay it down, and He had power to take it up again ; and the Spirit, emanating from Father and Son, carries on and perfects the gracious

work of sanctification in the souls of believers, all harmonizing and co-operating in the blessed object, and all bearing most indubitable testimony to the assertion of our text, that "God is love," that Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the one only God is love,—love infinite, unspeakable, unchangeable, in all the persons of the Godhead, and in all the variety of their operations.

We are this day, my friends, brought, in a solemn ordinance, to commemorate this glorious work of love, and more especially, the love of God, the Son, in His humiliation and His sufferings, and in the death, which for our sakes, He accomplished at Jerusalem. We are to remember His unwearied ardour in the work of His mission. His entire devotion of Himself to the object in which He was engaged. We are to follow Him in the prosecution of this purpose, to the Garden of Gethsemane, and remember His agony when He prayed, "if it be possible let this cup pass from me," while yet He submitted with implicit obedience to the will of the Father, and shrunk not in conformity to this, from drinking it even to the last bitter dregs, saying "not my will, but Thine be done."

We must accompany Him to the Judgment Hall, and remember how He submitted to cruel mockings and insults for our sakes; and how the sentence of death was pronounced upon Him, not for His own but for our sins. We must trace His painful steps to Calvary—His brow bleeding with the lacerations of the thorns of the insulting crown, and His back bent under the weight of that cross, on which, by His sufferings and death, He was to make expiation for the sins of His people. We must recall these sufferings undergone for our sake, as evidences of His love stronger than death,—and recall with thanksgiving His triumphant exclamation, as He gave up the ghost, "it is finished;" and we must remember the resurrection and ascension of Him, who, as he died to redeem, now and forever lives, the Saviour and the King of His people.

What evidences have we in all this of the love of Christ ! What effect should this love of Christ have upon us ? It should beget love in us,—love to Him who loved us,—love that will constrain us to shew our love,—love that will delight in holy obedience,—love that will beget confidence, and cast out fear. “Perfect love casteth out fear.”



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SERMON XIX.

"The Duties of the Flock to the Pastor."

(An Address to a Congregation at the Ordination of a Pastor.)

SINCE the organization of this congregation, my dear brethren, you have experienced varied dispensations in the providence of God. You have had years of prosperity and times of trial. You have been greatly favored with the ministrations of godly pastors, who have labored among you faithfully for Christ, and for your souls' sake,—and you have suffered bereavements. Some you have been called upon by the Lord to give up to Himself,—that having ceased from their labors, they might enter into their rest. Others you have been required to surrender, at the call of the Church, to occupy other spheres in the vineyard, sacrificing your individual wishes and your apparent interests, as a congregation, for the promotion of the prosperity of our Zion, or the advancement of the cause of Christ in general. Under these varied dealings, you have been taught, I trust, to appreciate the privilege of a faithful ministry. You have known what it is to have it, and what it is to want it,—and, I trust, that, under these circumstances, you have been led, at the present time, to seek, with all sincerity and earnestness, through prayer for the direction and blessing of God in the matter, a pastor whom the Lord Himself will approve, and whom He will bless, alike for your spiritual instruction and edification, and for the advancement of His own glory in the Church, and in the world. Upon the choice you have made depends, doubtless, very greatly your prosperity as a congregation, and the success of the Lord's work among you. But, remember, my brethren, that it is not, even under God, wholly upon your pastor that the success of the work depends.

He may have all requisite gifts and qualifications,—he may be truly a man of God, and have an earnest, untiring love for souls, and zeal in his work,—he may be an able and faithful expounder and preacher of the Word,—he may carefully seek and humbly rely upon the grace of God for direction and for strength;—but there is something yet wanting to success,—there is the conviction on your part, that the work is essentially your work—a work to be wrought in you as well as for you, and greatly by our own instrumentality.

Solemn indeed is the relation formed this day, between the pastor of your choice and you,—but remember that his success and your profiting will depend much, under God, upon yourselves. He has already been addressed very solemnly upon the duties and responsibilities of his office. It now devolves upon me, my dear brethren, to endeavor to bring before you some of your duties and responsibilities in regard to what is your great life work—the salvation of your souls—in which, while your pastor labors for you, you must, in order to its successful accomplishment, be fellow-workers together with him.

In the first place, it is your duty to render him all due honor in the Lord. In respecting him, you show respect to the office he holds and the commission he bears, as an ambassador for Christ, with a message for your souls. The ministry of the Gospel is an ordinance of the Lord. He hath appointed it as the great means of diffusing the knowledge of the Gospel, for the salvation of our guilty and perishing race, through the preaching of the Word, accompanied by the effectual application of it to the minds and hearts of men, by the Holy Spirit.

Ministers of the Gospel, although not inheriting the miraculous gifts of the Apostles, still hold the high commission which our Lord gave to them, to preach the Gospel to every creature; and, arduous as are their duties, and deep as is their responsibility, they are not sent forth at their own charges. They have the Lord's promise, if they are indeed called and commissioned by Him, "Be-

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hold I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," and the assurance "my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." In honoring your minister, therefore, in his faithful discharge, by divine grace, of the duties of his office, you honor Christ. And, young as the minister of your choice may be, and though he may have much yet to learn, by experience in his work, I trust that, according to the exhortation of Paul to Timothy, he will, through grace, exhibit such wisdom and prudence, such piety and zeal, that no man shall be able to despise his youth. By your due respect to his person and office, you will generally strengthen his hands, uphold his influence, and forward his work, to your own benefit and that of others,—while, by an opposite conduct, you will hinder, if not destroy, his usefulness. Remember that your minister is but a man, with like passions and frailties, as other men. Be not, therefore, captious or faultfinding towards him; triumph not in discovering him to be in the wrong,—rather screen his faults from the view of others, and deal kindly and tenderly, yet faithfully, with him in regard to them; encourage him by your advice and example in that which is good. It is easy to find fault, for who is free from blame,—but it is alike a Christian duty and true wisdom to bear with each other's infirmities, and to seek rather to amend than expose what is censurable. To bring to view trifling faults is to magnify them and make them the cause of much harm.

Secondly,—Attend with respectful earnestness on the teaching of your pastor. Listen, with a humble desire to receive instruction and profit, to his preaching and enforcing of the doctrines, promises, and precepts of the Word of God. Remember, my friends, the natural opposition of the heart of man to the Gospel. Remember the declaration of our Lord, that as the world hated Him, so will it hate His faithful servants,—and that all, even those in a state of grace, are more or less under the influence of this innate aversion to sound doctrine,—that the preach-

ing and dealings of a minister, who is faithful to his Master in the discharges of his duties, and faithful to the souls of his people, will offend men's corrupt natures, wound their pride of heart and prick their guilty consciences; and you have much need to guard yourselves lest it be God's truth which grieves you, or lest it be the reproof of your sins or the restraining of your lusts and covetous desires, —or the inculcating of irksome and unpleasant duties, which offends you,—lest the faithfulness of your minister, that on account of which he will receive the commendation of Lord in the great day, shall rise against you and condemn you.

Many, my friends, would be pleased to have smooth things spoken to them, and worldly ministers have a great temptation to do so, in seeking their own praise among men, rather than the approbation of their Master, and the saving of souls, and thus lead many—saying to themselves, "peace, peace," blindly to their ruin. What a privilege it is then to have a minister who will know nothing among his people but Christ and Him crucified—glorying only in the cross of Christ,—who will neither suppress nor add to the Word by one iota to please men,—one whose desire and prayer for his people is, that they may be saved, and that he may be an instrument in their conversion and salvation, to the glory of his Master,—who will not come to them with a message he has not received from Christ, and who fears not man in declaring the whole counsel of God! To the care of such you may fearlessly commit your souls' interests, assured that they will watch for them as those who must give an account,—and while, in all matters of doubt or of difficulty, you will appeal to the Word and to the testimony, you may, nevertheless, confide in such as faithful advisers, reliable guides, and worthy examples.

It is an awful thought that, to those who stumble and are offended at the Word, it will be a savor of death unto death,—to those alone who humbly receive and obey it, will it be a savor of life unto life. Think, my friends, how

it will aggravate your condemnation in the day of judgment, if, under a faithful ministry, and in the midst of light, you have remained in darkness,—either despising the great salvation of God, or shunning the light, lest your deeds should be reproved.

How much may the godly, in a congregation, stimulate and encourage their pastor to increased efforts by their eager hungering and thirsting after the bread and water of life, by their regular and interested waiting upon his ministration of Word and ordinance in the House of God, by their ever keeping before him and pressing upon him the wants and cravings of their souls. He will thus feel a deeper interest in their state, be more anxious to meet all their wants, and be able to dispense to each instruction, advice, encouragement and consolation, as they severally require,—for such an one cannot see the spiritually ignorant and destitute perishing for lack of instruction, or the alarmed and distressed needing comfort, without exerting himself to afford relief, any more than a benevolent heart can behold poverty, sickness, or suffering in the world, without an attempt to alleviate or remove it.

Do not accustom yourselves, my brethren, to be too critical about the preaching of your pastor, in the mere ornaments of style and manner. If the truths of God's word be fully, faithfully, clearly, and earnestly pressed upon you, many defects otherwise may be overlooked. The truly hungering soul seeks food, and, if wholesome food be supplied, it will easily dispense with dainties. The most gifted discourses, without Christ, or with Christ merely in the background, will not satisfy the man who is intent upon his salvation; but if Christ be presented in all the rich treasures of His grace, to the free acceptance of sinners, as their Saviour, in the experience of His exceeding preciousness,—all else will sink into comparative insignificance. When men are very nice about the dainties of the Gospel feast, it is to be suspected that they have but little relish for the simple bread and water of life.

Beware, my friends, of encouraging this, a tendency which is most injurious alike to yourselves and your pastor. The eloquence of the speaker will neither convince nor convert the heart. It is the simple, earnest preaching, and humble, prayerful hearing of God's Word, to which the enlightening and saving influences of the Holy Spirit are promised.

Thirdly,—it is your pastor's duty, my brethren, to visit you at your houses, as well as to minister to you from the pulpit. But remember that you must not look from him for visits of a mere social character. Your pastor's time and more important duties would not admit of this, even were it desirable in itself. As a general rule, your pastor should be expected in your houses in the discharge of his duties as a minister of Christ,—and even, in this respect, you must not be over exacting, remembering that if he fairly distributes the time which can be allotted to such duties, each family can have but a small portion of it. There will always be many cases of sickness, affliction, or bereavement, which call for special attention, and which must be dealt with as occasion requires and opportunity affords. When your minister visits you, receive him cordially. If his visit be expected, be prepared for his reception, and have as many members of your households present as possible. Do not waste time in desultory or unprofitable talk,—make the most of your opportunity, that both you and your pastor may feel that your time has not been lost. Let not your pastor be left to propose to conduct worship; show your desire for this by proposing it yourselves. He will thus engage in it with more freedom and heartiness and more acceptably. What a chill does it throw over the heart of a minister, when his proposal to join with a family in the worship of God is met with indifference, or with the freezing words—"if you choose." Where the minister feels that his visits are most appreciated and useful, he will be most inclined to repeat them. And if you think your minister's visits infrequent, seek to keep yourselves in his mind's eye, by

being regularly in your place in church, or in the prayer meeting,—and go to him if he yet fails to go to you. Amid the multitude of his duties, and the numbers to be visited, and amid the pressure of special calls, a minister may often omit, or seem to neglect some,—but do not brood over the seeming carelessness as a designed offence,—do not allow yourselves silently to be passed over; and your expressed desire of the visits of your pastor will either obtain them for you, or explain why they have been omitted. In special cases, such as sudden illness or affliction, while the pastor's visits are missed, there are often no means taken to inform him of the occasion, and when at last he is sent for, it is, perhaps, too late for him to be of use. Send at once, when there may be need of, or you may wish your minister's presence, and you will hardly fail of your object.

Fourthly,—bear your minister and his work continually on your hearts before God, in prayer. This will be the holding up of his hands, and will obtain the blessing of God upon his labors in your behalf, which alone can make them effectual for good to you, and particularly let it be the subject of earnest prayer alike in the closet and in the family, on the Sabbath day, that your minister may be strengthened from above for the discharge of his duties, and that the preparation of the heart to profit by his labors may be bestowed upon you, that you may not be forgetful hearers, but doers of the work,—not relying upon your privileges, but upon the evidences of fruit from these, as manifest in your hearts and lives.

Fifthly,—be ready to co-operate with your pastor and the office-bearers of your congregation in every good work, and be hearty in rendering such aid as circumstances will allow. Give a due share of your time, your labor, your substance to the general interests of the congregation, such as sustaining the Sabbath school, the Bible class, the prayer-meeting, and also of the church and cause of Christ, in aiding the Bible cause, tract distributing, missionary enterprise, and other religious and benevolent

objects. Each may thus find a suitable department of useful labor for himself, and thus greatly assist in or relieve the pastor's work. Let the office-bearers of the congregation especially be fellow-workers with their minister, in the care of the flock, to strengthen his authority and influence, to share his burdens and lighten his duties, or alleviate his anxieties, and to extend the benefits of his ministrations. Let all be ready to take their part in the work, for all are members, and no member can be even inactive without injury to the body. Not to be for Christ is to be against Him. Pride, indifference, and slothfulness are often concealed behind the mask of a professed humility.

Sixthly,—I do not feel that I have any need to address you specially in regard to a provision for the temporal wants of your minister. I would only say, let it be liberal, such as to place him above anxiety about money matters, and enable him suitably to occupy the position in society which, as your minister, he ought to hold, to meet the various calls for hospitality and charity which will be made upon him, and especially to enable him to keep his library up to the standard of the intelligence of his people, and the requirements of the age.

In conclusion, my friends, cherish a free, confiding intercourse with your pastor in regard to the interests of your immortal souls and of the cause of religion among you. Lay open your hearts to him, that, as a faithful physician, he may know the plague of your hearts, and suggest the remedy. To know the soul's troubles is half the cure, for there is a balm in Gilead for every wound; and shrink not from the pain he may inflict, in seeking to reach the roots, that he may eradicate the disease, and not slightly heal over a rankling sore. Do not, however, mix up your pastor in your secular affairs. He is not generally the best adviser in such matters, and his taking part in them often leads to trouble, and hinders his usefulness. He has more than enough to do in his own special work.

The solemn transactions of this day must result to each of you either in good or evil. The privileges you enjoy must either raise you higher or sink you lower, according as you profit by them, or the reverse. Let it not be said of any of you that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you, because you would not hearken to the warnings and entreaties of God's Word. Fear not, my brethren, the reproof of your sins, the humbling of your pride, the sacrifice of your fleshly lusts and covetous desires, but seek in the light of God's word to know the evil of all these things,—and that because of these the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience, and flee from the wrath revealed, and lay hold of the hope set before you in the Gospel,—for now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. And you, who are God's people, improve carefully your privileges, "for to whom much is given, of them also shall much be required." But to them that labor faithfully in the Lord is a glorious and a sure reward,—a reward not of works, but of grace,—not measured by our imperfect efforts, but the gift of God's immeasurable love,—such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard, not the heart of man conceived, which shall infinitely outshine all earthly good, and sink all the trials and troubles of the Christian warfare in the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which shall follow, when they, who are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ of the Kingdom of Heaven, shall have entered into their inheritance, and shall receive that unfading crown which the Lord hath prepared for all them that love Him.

THE END.

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