

PRACTICAL DISCOURSES  
ON  
REGENERATION,  
IN  
TEN SERMONS.

ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:

- I. The Character of the Unregenerate.
- II. III. The Nature of Regeneration.
- IV. V. VI. The Necessity and Importance of it.
- VII. The Divine Influences necessary to produce it.
- VIII. The various Methods in which those Influences operate.
- IX. Directions to awakened Sinners.
- X. An Address to the Regenerate.

PREACHED AT NORTHAMPTON,

AND PUBLISHED AT THE EARNEST REQUEST OF MANY THAT  
HEARD THEM.

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By P. DODDRIDGE, D. D. *R*

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Ἐκάνη παραμυθία τῶν πονῶν, καὶ πάντων μεζῶν, ὅταν εαυτῶν συνείδησις  
δυνατῆι ΠΡΟΣ ΑΡΕΣΚΕΙΑΝ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ συνίθῃς καὶ ρυθμίζῃς τὴν  
Διδασκαλίαν.

Chrysostom. de Sacerd. *Lib. v. §. 7.*

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THE SIXTH EDITION.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

*THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE*

OF

SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH;

Illustrated and improved in TWO SERMONS: The Substance of which  
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## P R E F A C E.

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IT is undoubtedly the *duty* of every wise and good man, to be forming *schemes* for the service of God and his fellow-creatures in *future years*, if he be continued to them; and it will be his *prudence* to do it *early in life*, that he may be gradually preparing to execute them in the most advantageous manner he can. But while a *man's heart* is thus *devising his way*, the Lord directeth his steps. And as many such *schemes* will probably be left unfinished *at death*, which will quickly come to *break off our purposes and the thoughts of our hearts*; so it is not improbable that they who humbly and obediently follow the leadings of Divine Providence and Grace, may often find themselves *called out* on a sudden *to services* which, but a little before, were quite unthought of by them.

THIS has been the case with me in most of the *Sermons* I have published, of which very few were composed with any view to

the *press*; and it is most remarkably so with respect to these *on Regeneration*. Besides many other excellent persons, my much honoured friend *Dr. Wright* has handled the subject in so judicious and lively a manner, and through the great goodness of God to us, so many thousands of his *treatise upon it* are dispersed in all parts of our land, that I could hardly have believed any one who had told me I should *thus* have resumed it; nor had I the least intention of doing it, when I began that *course of Lectures* which I now offer to my reader's perusal.

I DID indeed think it necessary last year to treat the *subject* more largely than I had ever done before, knowing in the general how *important* it is, and observing that several *controversies* had about that time been raised concerning it, which (though I do not judge it necessary to mention the particulars of them) I was ready to fear, might have had an ill influence to unsettle men's minds, and either to lead them into some particular *errors*, or into a general apprehension that it was a mere point of *speculation*, about which it was not necessary to form any judgment at all\*.

THAT *these Discourses* might be more generally *useful*, I determined to preach them

\* See Mr. Hebden's Appendix to his late Discourse on REGENERATION.

on *Lord's day evenings*, that those of my neighbours who were not my stated hearers might, if they thought proper, have an opportunity of attending them: and accordingly they were attended to the last with uncommon diligence; a great many such persons, of different persuasions and communions, making up a part of the auditory. As *practical instruction and improvement* was the main thing I had in view, I knew it was necessary to make my *Discourses* as plain, as free, and as serious as I could. But before I had finished near half of my *scheme*, several of my hearers earnestly requested that the *Sermons* might be *published*: and the request grew more extensive and importunate every week; with this additional circumstance (which I much regarded) that some very pious and judicious friends at a distance, being providentially brought to the hearing of some of these *Lectures*, strongly concurred in the desire; expressing a very cheerful hope, that the *reading* of what they had *heard* might be useful in distant parts of the land, to which they assured me they would endeavour to spread them as opportunity might offer. As the advice of several of my *brethren in the ministry* was joined with all this, I thought myself bound in duty at length to comply; which I was the rather encouraged to do from the several instances in which I had reason to

believe the *Divine blessing* had in some measure attended *these Sermons* from the pulpit, and had made them the *means* of producing and advancing the *change* they described and enforced.

On these considerations, as soon as I returned from that long journey on which I set out the day after *these Lectures* were concluded, I applied myself to recollect the substance of them as well as I could, from the *short hints* I had written of them, with the assistance of those *notes* which some of my friends had taken after me in *characters*. Some things are perhaps omitted, though I believe but very few; some contracted, and some enlarged; but my hearers will find them in the main what they heard. It cost me more labour than I was aware, *from such materials*, to reduce them into their present form; and I hope the multitude of my other business will be allowed as an apology, if I proceeded in them slower than some might expect.

I SHALL leave it to my reader to observe for himself the *manner* and *method* in which I have handled my subject, without giving him a particular view of it here; only must beg leave to tell him in the general, that I hope he will find I have not presumed so far on the *sublimity* of my subject, as to talk *without determinate ideas*; for which reason I have  
omitted

omitted many *phrases*, used particularly of late by some pious and worthy persons, because I freely own, that as I cannot find them in my *Bible*, so neither can I understand their exact meaning; and it seems very improper to embarrass such *plain Discourses* as these with a language, which, not being thoroughly master of, I may chance to misapply, supposing those *phrases* to be really more proper than I can at present apprehend they are. I have endeavoured to keep to *one idea* of REGENERATION, which I take to be *that* which the *Scripture* suggests: by REGENERATION I mean “a prevailing disposition of the soul to  
 “ universal holiness, produced and cherished  
 “ by the influences of GOD’s *Spirit* on our  
 “ hearts, operating in a manner suitable to  
 “ the constitution of our nature, as rational  
 “ and accountable creatures.” If *this* be (as I think I have proved at large that it is) the *Scriptural notion* of it, it will follow, that nothing which may be found where *this* is not, or which may not be found where *this* is, can be REGENERATION in the *Scripture sense*, which is *that sense* in which we are much more concerned than we are in *that* to which any *human writers*, whether *ancient* or *modern*, may think proper to apply it.

If the *Doctrine* which I have endeavoured in the whole course of *these Sermons*, to confirm and illustrate by the *word of GOD*, be

in one form or another generally taught by my *brethren in the ministry*, of whatever *denomination*, I rejoice in it for their own sakes, as well as for that of the people under their care. I am very little inclined to contend about *technical phrases* of human invention, which have with equal frailty been *idolized* by some and *anathematized* by others. We shall, I hope, learn more and more to *bear one another's burthens*, and to study the kindest interpretations which the words of each other will admit. But I must take the liberty to say, I am in my conscience persuaded that *this view of things* which is here proposed, though perhaps *not very fashionable*, is in the general so *edifying*, and so naturally leads to the frequent review of many other important *doctrines of Christianity*, which are closely connected with it, that I am well satisfied it will be our wisdom to adhere to it, and to make it very familiar to our own minds, and to those of our hearers. Nor can I imagine that any *variety* in the *idioms* of different languages, or the *customs* of different ages and nations, can be a sufficient reason for bringing *Scripture phrases* into disuse, while we keep to the *original ideas* signified by them. There seems to be a peculiar felicity in them to express *Divine truth*; and they will undoubtedly be found the *safest vehicle of religious knowledge*, and the *surest band of*



*union* among *Christians*; while, however we may differ in other matters, we so generally agree in acknowledging that our *bibles* contain *the oracles of GOD*.

LET us therefore, who under *different denominations* are honoured with the *ministry* of the *everlasting Gospel*, agree, for a while at least, to suspend our debates upon *less necessary subjects*, that we may with united efforts, concur in prosecuting *that great design* for which the *Gospel* was revealed, the *Spirit* given, and our *office* instituted. And since it is so evident that *irreligion* has grown upon us, while we have been attending to *other*, and to be sure *smaller matters*, let us by a plain, serious, and zealous way of *preaching* the most *vital truths* of *Christianity*, joined with a diligent inspection of the souls committed to our care, try what can be done towards preventing the progress of this *growing apostacy*, and recovering the ground we have already lost. Ignorant and prejudiced people may perhaps accuse us of *bigotry* or *enthusiasm*; but let us do our best to convince them of their error by the *candour* of our *temper*, and the *prudence* of our *conduct*; and remember, that as *Chrysostom* excellently speaks in those lively words which I have inserted in the *title page*, “It is a sufficient consolation  
“ for our labours, and far more than an

“ equivalent for all, if we may have a testi-  
“ mony in our consciences, that we compose  
“ and regulate our discourses in such a man-  
“ ner as may be *approved by* GOD, in whose  
“ name we speak.”

*Northampton;*  
*Nov. 7, 1741.*

## POSTSCRIPT.



**T**O what I have said in the conclusion of the first Sermon concerning the proper import of the word REGENERATION, I beg leave to add the following remarks for the farther satisfaction of some worthy persons, who think it may be convenient to state the matter a little more particularly.

I ACKNOWLEDGE that many learned and pious *divines* have taught and contended, that REGENERATION does, in the strictest propriety of speech, signify BAPTISM. So that *no unbaptized person*, how well disposed soever, can properly be said to be *regenerated*; whereas that title may justly be given to *all who have been baptized*, how destitute soever they might have been of Christian faith and holiness when they received the ordinance, or how grossly soever they may since have forfeited the final blessings of a regenerate state. *Dr. Waterland* has stated this matter at large in his laboured and ingenious treatise on the subject, which is the best I know

on this side of the question. And though this would be a very improper place to enter on a critical examination of that piece, I will briefly touch on the *chief arguments* which he, or others in his sentiments, have urged in vindication of this favourite notion. So far as I can recollect, what they say is capable of being reduced to two heads;—that *Christian antiquity* uses the word in this sense;—and that there are passages of *Scripture* which authorize such an application of it.

As to the first of these, I readily own that the word has *this sense* in the generality of the *Christian writers*, from about the middle of the *second century*, though I think not so universally as some have concluded\*: but I think it easy to account for such an use of it among them. For in the earliest ages of the church, persons were generally *baptized* as soon as they were *converted* to the cordial belief of *Christianity*; and therefore the time of their *conversion*, and that of their *baptism*, might naturally enough be spoken of as one:

\* *Clemens Alexandrinus*, so often, and to be sure reasonably, quoted on the other side, plainly uses the word for a change of character by true repentance; (*Strom. lib. ii. page 425.*) where, speaking of a penitent harlot, he says, “that being born again by conversion, or a change in her temper and behaviour, she has the re-generation of life:” ἀναγεννηθεῖσα κατὰ τὴν ἐπιστροφὴν τῆς βίης ἀναγεννηθεῖσάν ἐχει ζωὴν.

and

and as this was a period when they did, as it were, *come into a new world*, it is no wonder that *the action* by which they testified a change so lately made, should be put for, *that change* itself. Just as *illumination* also among the ancients signifies *baptism*: not to intimate that the grand illumination of the mind was made by this rite, or at the time of it; for that would be supposing the person in darkness when he embraced the Gospel, and determined to be baptized: but because it was taken for granted, and that very justly in those days, that *every one savingly enlightened* would soon be *baptized*, that so he might be regularly joined to, the society of *enlightened* or *regenerated persons*, that is, to the *Christian church*: which no doubt had the best right of any body of men in the world to that title, though in its purest state it contained some ignorant and wicked members. In a word, a man by *baptism* solemnly *professed himself a Christian*; and as it was generally *the first overt-act* by which his believing the Gospel could be publicly and generally known, and was also supposed to be very near the time of his inward conversion, they dated *his regeneration*, that is, *his happy change* (as that word used to signify even among the heathen \*) from that time. We own there-  
fore

\* It is well known that *Cicero* expresses *the happy change* made in his state, when restored from his banishment,

fore that these *ancient Christians* (of whom I always think and speak with great respect) had a very good excuse for this method of speaking; but whether they were perfectly accurate in this, and whether they did not recede from the Scripture use of the word, may be matter of farther enquiry.

As to the arguments from *Scripture* in support of the interpretation I oppose, they are taken partly from *particular places*; but chiefly, as I apprehend, from *the general tenor of it*, in which *Christians* are spoken of as *regenerated*.

THE *particular texts* are *John* iii. 5. and *Tit.* iii. 5. on which much of the stress of this controversy is laid; but on considering them attentively, I find nothing in either of them to lead us to think *baptism* the regeneration spoken of there.

nishment, by this word. (*Cic. ad Attic. lib. vi. Epist. 6.*) The *Greeks* expressed by it *the doctrine of the Brachmans*, in which they affirmed our entering on a *new state of being* after death. (*Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. iii. page 451.*) And the *Stoicks* used it to denote their expected *renovation of the world* after successive conflagrations. *Marc. Antonin. Medit. lib. xi. §. 1. v. 13. &c. 7.* (See *Lucian, Oper. pag. 532. Euseb. Præp. Evang. ex numen. lib. xv. chap. 19. Phil. Jud. de Mundi Immort. pag. 940, 951, and in many other places.*) And so the *fathers* often use it to signify *the resurrection* which *Christians* expect. See *Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. v. chap. 1. in fin.* Compare *Matt. xix. 28.* and the *Note* there: *Fam. Expos. Vol. II. pag. 238.*

As.

As to the former of them, *John* iii. 5. when our Lord says, *Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD*; it is (after all the contempt with which that interpretation has been treated) very possible he may mean, by a well-known figure, to express *one idea* by both those clauses, that is, *the purifying influences of the Spirit* cleansing the mind, as *water* does the body: as elsewhere, to be *baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire* (*Matt.* iii. 11.) signifies to be baptized *by the Spirit* operating *like fire*. But if there is indeed a *reference to baptism* in these words (which I own I am much inclined to believe) it will by no means follow that *baptism* is REGENERATION. On that supposition, I still think the sense of the passage must be that which I have given in my *paraphrase* on it (*Fam. Expos. vol. I. pag. 148.*) “Whosoever  
 “ would become a regular member of the  
 “ kingdom of God, must not only be bap-  
 “ tized, but as ever he desires to share in  
 “ its spiritual and eternal blessings, must ex-  
 “ perience the renewing and sanctifying in-  
 “ fluences of the Holy Spirit on his soul, to  
 “ cleanse it from the power of corruption,  
 “ and to animate and quicken it to a spiri-  
 “ tual and Divine life.” It is granted there-  
 fore, that how excellent soever any man’s  
 character is, he must be *baptized* before he

can be looked upon as completely: a member of the church of Christ; and that, in general, *being born of the Spirit*, he will also be solicitous that he may *be born of water*; and so fulfil all righteousness. But it will never follow from hence, that *being born of water* and *born of the Spirit* are the same thing. The text rather implies they are *different*; and I think every body must own, they may be *actually separate*. Nothing therefore can be more absurd than to infer from this text, that if there be two persons, one of which is *born of the Spirit*, and *not of water*; another *of water*, and *not of the Spirit*; the latter, that is, *the wicked man* who has perhaps with some iniquitous design been *baptized*; may properly be said to be *regenerated*; or *born of GOD*, and consequently to be *an heir of GOD*, (*Rom. viii. 17.*) rather than a *truly religious man* who has *not yet been baptized*, either through want of opportunity, or through some unhappy mistake, as to the nature and design, or the perpetuity and obligations of that ordinance. Now this I take to be *precisely the question*, and must declare that when a *baptized person* is destitute of true religion, *that birth* which he had *by water*, seems to me as it were *an evanescent thing*, or a thing which disappears as unworthy the mention; and that it must be therefore most safe and advisable, as well as most agreeable



agreeable to the Scripture sense; to appropriate the title of *regenerate persons* to those *sanctified by Divine Grace*, rather than to use it of *all who are baptized*.

As to the text in *Titus* (*chap. iii. 5.*) where GOD is said to *save us by the washing of regeneration*, or, as some earnestly contend it should be rendered, *by the laver of regeneration*: I might answer, that as that interpretation is by no means necessary \*, it cannot be proved that *baptism* is here designed, though I acknowledge there may be a graceful allusion to it: the *Apostle* may mean, we are saved *by GOD's washing our hearts by his sanctifying Spirit* (a phrase so often used in the *Old Testament*) and thereby *making us his children*: and in this sense it might have been used, though *baptism* had never been instituted. But granting (as I have done in the beginning of the *seventh Sermon, pag. 135.*) that *Λαβρον* may be rendered *laver*, and that

\* The original is *δια λουτρος παλιγγενεσίας*. Now it is certain, the *seventy* use another word, that is, *Λατρος*, to signify *Laver*, *Exod. xxx. 18. 28. xxxi. 9*; and I think (so far as I have observed) every where else: and *Λαβρον* (*St. Paul's* word here) is used where it cannot signify *laver*, for *the water in which sheep are washed*, *Cant. iv. 2.* and for *a large quantity of water in which an adult person was washed or bathed*. *Eph. v. 26.* And this remark quite overthrows all the argument from *this text*, if any argument would follow from rendering it *laver*: but I think I need not urge this.

*baptism* may be the *laver* referred to; and that “there is indeed an allusion to the *washing new-born children* ;” (as *Mr. Mede* in his *diatribe* on this text contends;) I think this text will be so far from proving that *St. Paul* meant to call *baptism* REGENERATION, that it will prove the contrary: for *regeneration* itself, and *the laver of regeneration*, cannot be the same thing; and whatever *Tertullian* and other ancients may fancifully talk of our being *generated like fishes in the water*, in a weak allusion to the technical word ΙΧΘΥΣ, common sense will see how absurd it would be to apply this to *a child*, and will teach us rather to argue, that as *children* must be *born* before they can be *washed*, so they must be *regenerated* before *the washing of regeneration* (that is, the washing which belongs to their new birth) can be applied to them. But on the whole, as *washing an infant* refers to *its pollution*, and *no pollution* attends our *regeneration* as such, I am more and more inclined to think there is *no reference* at all here to *a laver*, or to the *washing new-born children*; and therefore, that this *washing* and *the renewing of the Holy Ghost* are exegetical, and that the latter clause might be rendered, *even the renewing, &c.* which makes the text decisive for the sense in which I use the word.

AFTER

AFTER all then, if any argument can be deduced from *Scripture* in favour of the manner of speaking now in debate, it must be from *the general tenor of it*; according to which it seems that all who are *members of the visible church* are spoken of as *regenerate*; from which it may be inferred, with some plausible probability at least, that *baptism*, by which they are admitted into that society, may be called REGENERATION: and I am ready to believe, as I hinted above, that this was the chief reason why *the ancients* so often used the word in the sense I am now opposing.

Now with relation to this, I desire it may be recollected, that when *Christianity* first appeared in the world, it was attended with *such discouragements*, as made the very *profession of it*, in a great measure, *a test of men's characters*. The *Apostles* therefore, knowing the number of *hypocrites* to be comparatively very small, generally take no notice of them, but address themselves to *whole bodies of Christians*, as if they were truly what they professed to be. Just as our *Lord Jesus Christ*, though he knew the wickedness of *Judas*, often addresses himself to the *whole body of his Apostles*, as if they were *all* his faithful servants, and makes gracious declarations and promises to the *whole society*, which could by no means be applicable to  
this

this one corrupt and wretched member of it; telling them, for instance, that *they should share in his final triumph, and sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Mat. xix. 28.

THIS is therefore *the true key* to all those passages in which *Christians* are, in the general, said to be *adopted, sanctified, justified, &c.* as well as *regenerated*. The *Apostles* had reason in the judgment of charity, to think thus of by far the greatest part of them; and therefore they *speak to them all*, as in such a happy state. And agreeably to this, we find not only *such privileges*, but also *such characters*; ascribed to *Christians in general*, as were only applicable to such of them as were *Christians indeed*. Thus all the *Corinthians* are spoken of by the *Apostle Paul* as *waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, (1 Cor. i. 7.) and all the *Ephesians*, and all the *Colossians*, as having *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and love to all the saints* (Eph. i. 15. Col. i. 4.) and all the *Philippians*, as having a *good work begun in them*, which *Paul* was persuaded *GOD would perfect* (Phil. i. 6.) and all the *Thessalonians*, as remarkable for *their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope* (1 Thess. i. 3.) though it evidently appears there were persons in several of these churches who behaved much amiss; and to whom, had he been particularly addressing to each of them alone, he could not

not by any means, have used such language. On the like principles *Peter*, when addressing to all the *Christians* in *Pontus*, *Galatia*, *Cappadocia*, *Asia*, and *Bitthynia*, speaks of the whole aggregate of them (1 *Pet.* i. 8.) as *loving an unseen Saviour*, and amidst all their tribulations, *rejoicing in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory*; though probably there were some *weak and dejected Christians* among them, and undoubtedly in so large an extent of country, in which there were such a vast number of churches, *not a few*, who (as *our Lord* afterwards expresses it of some of them) *had only a name to live, while they were dead*, (*Rev.* iii. 1.) in which passage, by the way, *our Lord* uses the same figure, and describes *the whole body* by the character of those who made the greater part of it.

I STATE the matter thus particularly, because I think this obvious remark is a sufficient answer to what is most peculiar and important in a late Discourse, consisting of near 130 *quarto pages*, and intitled, *A Key to the Apostolic Writings*, &c. prefixed by the Rev. Mr. Taylor of *Norwich* to his late *Paraphrase and Notes on the Romans*. I think what I have briefly advanced here, will much more effectually answer the end of fixing *the true sense* of the *Scripture phrases* in question. And I cannot forbear saying, that to determine the sense of the words *called, redeemed, sanctified,*

*sanctified, &c.* when applied to the *Christian church*, by that in which they are used in *Moses* and *the prophets* with respect to *the whole people of Israel*, seems to me as unreasonable, as it would be to maintain, that the dimensions, the strength, and the beauty of a body, are to be most exactly estimated by looking on its shadow.

YET on this evidently weak and mistaken principle, the learned and ingenious *Author* referred to above, ventures not only to attempt *an entire alteration* in the generally-received strain of *theological Discourses*, but to throw out *a censure*, which, considering its extent and its severity, must either be very terrible, or very pitiable. He not only seems to think, if I understand him right, that we were *all regenerated* (if at all) as well as *justified*, in those of *our parents* who were *first converted* from *idolatry* to *Christianity* (*Key*, §. 81, 82. and 246.) as indeed he expressly says, “that we are *born in a justified*,” and therefore undoubtedly (if the word is to be retained) in *a regenerate* “state:” but he presumes to say, that *such doctrines* as have been almost universally taught and received among *Christians*, concerning “*Justification*,  
“*regeneration, redemption, &c.* have quite  
“taken away the very ground of the *Chris-*  
“*tian* life, the *grace* of *God*, and have left  
“no object for the faith of a sinner to work  
“upon.”

“ upon.” (§. 357.) And hereupon, lest it should be forgot, he repeats it in the *same section*, that to represent it as “ the subject  
 “ of doubtful enquiry; trial, and examina-  
 “ tion, whether we have *an interest in Christ*;  
 “ whether we are *in a state of pardon*, whe-  
 “ ther we be *adopted*.” (and by consequence, to be sure, whether we be *regenerated*) “ is” (as the *Antinomians* I imagine would also say) “ to make *our justification*, as it invests us in  
 “ those blessings, to be of *works*, and not  
 “ by faith alone:” and (as was just before said in the same words) “ to take away the  
 “ very ground of the Christian life, the *grace*  
 “ of God, and to leave no object for the  
 “ faith of a sinner to act upon.” And *this way of stating things*, which has so generally prevailed, is joined with the *wickedness and contentions* of professing Christians, as a third *cause* of that *disregard to the Gospel* which is so common in the present day.

Now as no book can fall more directly under *this censure*, than this of *mine*, in which it is the business of the *three first Sermons* to direct professing Christians in an *enquiry*, whether they be or be not in a *regenerate state*; I thought it not improper, in this *post-script*, briefly to acquaint my reader with the principles on which I continue to think *the views*, in which I have put the matter, to be *rational*

*rational and scriptural* \*, and do still in my conscience judge it *far preferable* to what *the advocates of baptismal regeneration* on the one hand, or *Mr. Taylor* on the other, would introduce. It seems to me, that the points in dispute with *him* are much more important than our debates with *them*, as a much greater number of *Scriptures* are concerned, and the

\* For the full proof of this, that it is *the most scriptural sense*, I must desire the reader diligently to examine, and seriously to consider, *the several texts* which are quoted in the following Discourses; for it would swell this *postscript* too much to enumerate them all here, and to give them a critical examination. Let it still be remembered, that to be *regenerated*, and to be *born of GOD*, are *equivalent phrases*: And with this remark, let any one that can do it *paraphrase* all the passages referred to, in two different views; first putting the word *baptism* for *regeneration*, and *baptized persons* for *born of GOD*; and then substituting *our definition of regeneration* or of a *regenerate person*, instead of the *words themselves*: and I cannot but think he will be struck with *that demonstration*, which will (as it were), emerge of itself upon such a trial. And I must add, that if he looks into *the context* of many of these passages, he will at the same time see how utterly ungrounded it is to assert, as some have done, “that *regeneration* is only used when applied to *Jewish converts to Christianity*, referring to their *former birth from Abraham*?” a notion so fully confuted by *our Lord’s Discourse with Nicodemus*, *John* iii. 3, & seq. by *Tit.* iii. 5. and by *1 Pet.* i. 3. 23. ii. 2. when compared with *1 Pet.* i. 14. iv. 3. (which proves that the *Apostle* there wrote to societies, of which the greater part had before been *idolatrous Gentiles*) that I think it quite superfluous to discuss it more largely here.

whole



whole tenor of our *ministerial addresses* would be much more sensibly affected. Had I leisure to discuss the matter more largely with this gentleman, I should think it might be an important service to the *Gospel of Christ*. I hope it will be undertaken by some abler hand; and shall, in the mean time, go on *preaching* and *writing* in the manner so solemnly condemned, with no apprehension from the discharge of all this *overloaded artillery*, except it be what I feel for the zealous engineer himself, and a few other friends who may chance to stand nearer him than in prudence they ought.

Northampton,

June 13, 1745.

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SERMON I.

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*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*

**A**MONG all the various trusts which men can repose in each other, hardly any appears to me more solemn and tremendous, than the direction of their sacred time, and especially of those hours which they spend in the exercise of publick devotion. These seasons take up so small a part of our lives,  
B when

when compared with that which the labours and recreations of them demand; and so much depends upon their being managed aright, that we, who are called to assist you in the employment and improvement of them, can hardly be too solicitous, that we discharge the trust, in a manner which we may answer to GOD and to you. If this thought dwell upon the mind with due weight, it will have some sensible influence upon our discourses to you, as well as on the strain of those addresses which we present to the Throne of Grace in your name, and on your account. We shall not be over anxious about the order of words, the elegance of expression, or the little graces of composition or delivery; but shall study to speak on the most important subjects, and to handle them with such gravity and seriousness, with such solemnity and spirit, as may, through the Divine Blessing, be most likely to penetrate the hearts of our hearers, to awaken those that are entirely unconcerned about religion, and to animate and assist those, who, being already acquainted with it, desire to make continual advances, which will be the case of every truly good man.

It is my earnest prayer for myself, and for my brethren in the ministry of all denominations, that we may, in this respect, approve our wisdom and integrity to GOD, and *commend ourselves to the consciences of all men* (a). It is our charge, as we shall answer it another day to *the GOD of the spirits of all flesh*, to use our prudent and zealous endeavours, to make men truly wise and good, virtuous and happy: but to this purpose, it is by no means sufficient to content ourselves, merely with attempting to reform the immoralities and irregularities of their lives, and to bring them to an external

(a) 2 Cor. iv, 2.



behaviour, decent, honourable, and useful. An undertaking like this, while the inward temper is neglected, even when it may seem most effectual, will be but like painting the face of one who is ready to die, or labouring to repair a ruinous house, by plastering and adorning its walls, while its foundations are decayed. There is an awful passage in *Ezekiel* to this purpose, which I hope we shall often recollect: *Wo to the foolish prophets,—because they have seduced my people, saying, peace, when there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: say unto them that daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall:—Thus saith the Lord GOD, I will even rent it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hail-stones in my fury to consume it; so will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I am the LORD (b).*

If there be any, in one body of *Christians*, or another, that abet mens natural disposition to flatter themselves in a way that is not good, by encouraging them to hope for salvation, because they were regularly baptised in their infancy; because they have diligently attended on publick worship, in its established, or its separate forms; or merely because they do no body any harm, but are rather kind and helpful to others; or because their faith is orthodox, their transports of affection warm, or their assurance confident; I pray GOD to awaken them by the power of his grace, before they are consumed,

(b) Ezek. xiii. 10--14.

with their hearers, in the ruins of their deceitful building. Those of you who are my stated hearers can witness for me, that in this respect *I have delivered my own soul* (c). It has been the steady tenor of my doctrine among you, that our hope and confidence must be in *Christ*, and not in ourselves; and that, if we desire to be interested in the righteousness he has wrought out, and in the blessings he has purchased by his sacred blood, we must be experimentally acquainted with the work of *God's* renewing grace upon our souls, curing the inward distempers of our degenerate hearts, and transforming us into the image of his holiness: that is what we are taught in Scripture to call by the name of *REGENERATION*; and considering how much the subject is neglected by some, and I fear I may add, misrepresented and disguised by others, I apprehend I shall profitably employ an *evening-hour* for several succeeding sabbaths, in giving a larger account than I have yet done, of the *scripture doctrine* on this important subject, in its various parts. It shall be my care in the series of these Discourses, as *God* shall enable me, to *speak the words of truth and soberness* (d); and I intreat you to have recourse to *the law and to the testimony* (e), that you may judge of the truth and weight of what I say. I desire not to be regarded any farther, than I produce evidence from *reason and scripture*: but so far as we are disregarded, while we have the concurrent testimony of both, our hearers must see to it; and their danger will then be proportionable to the importance of those truths, which their negligence, or their prejudice, engage them either to reject, or to overlook.

(c) Ezek. xxxiii. 9. (d) Acts xxvi. 27. (e) Isa. viii. 20.

THE *plan*, on which I intend to proceed in the course of these *Lectures*, is this:

I. I WILL endeavour to describe the *character* of those, whom we may properly call persons in an *unregenerate state*.

II. I WILL describe the *nature* of that *change*, which may properly be called *Regeneration*, or *Conversion*.

III. I WILL shew at large the absolute *necessity* of this change, and the consequent *misery* of those that are *strangers* to it.

IV. I SHALL endeavour to prove the *reality* and *necessity* of the *Divine Influences* on the mind, in the production of such a change.

V. I SHALL describe some of those various *methods*, by which GOD is pleased to *operate* in the production of this holy and important work.

VI. I SHALL propose some *advices* to those who are already awakened, as to the method in which they are to seek renewing and converting grace. After which,

VII. I SHALL conclude these Discourses with an *address* to those who have experienced this *happy change*, as to the manner in which they ought to be affected with such a series of Sermons as this, and the improvement they should make of what they are to hear, and what they have felt agreeable to it.

I SHOULD be peculiarly inexcusable, if I entered upon such a subject, without earnest and importunate prayers to the Fountain of Light, Grace, and Holiness, that while you hear of this important doctrine, you may have that experimental knowledge of it, without which such Discourses will indeed seem obscure and enthusiastical, according to the degree in which they are rational and spiritual. I shall only add, that these *Lectures* will take their rise from a variety of *texts*, which I shall not, according

to my usual method, largely open and dilate upon, but only touch on them as so many *mottos* to the respective *Sermons* to which they are prefixed.

As I intend not *philosophical essays*, but plain, practical, and popular addressés, I shall begin,

FIRST, With describing the *character* of those, whom we may properly call *Unconverted* and *Unregenerated Persons*.

It is absolutely necessary that I should do *this*, that you may respectively know your own personal concern in what is further to be laid before you in the process of these *Lectures*.

Now you have the *general character* of such; in the words of my *text*; and a very sad one it is: They are represented, as *dead in trespasses and sins*, utterly indisposed both for the actions and enjoyments of the spiritual and divine life; as *walking according to the course of this world*, a sad intimation that it was the state of the generality of mankind; nay, *according to the Prince of the power of the air*, that impure and wicked spirit, who works, or exerts his energy, *in the children of disobedience*, that is, in those who reject and despise the Gospel; in which it is implied, (and a dreadful implication it is) that the course and conduct of those who *reject the Gospel* is according to the desire and instigation of *the prince of darkness*: they are going on as the *devil himself* would have them, and chuse that path for themselves, which he chuses for them; as leading them to most certain and most aggravated ruin.

AND who are these unhappy persons? Surely there must be *some of them* among us: for who can flatter himself, that in so numerous an assembly, *the course of all* is different from *that of the world*; and that *all* have happily triumphed over the artifices of that *accursed spirit*, who is, by God's

righteous

righteous permission, become *its prince*, while it continues in its apostate state? I shall however think it a very happy point gained, if I could convince any of you, who are justly liable to that conviction, that *you are the men*; if I could, as it were, render visible to your eyes those subtil, yet strongly complicated *chains*, in which *Satan* is binding you, and by which he is drawing you on to eternal ruin; that you might *recover yourselves out of the snare of the devil, who are led captive by him at his pleasure* (f).

I AM *this evening* to describe the *character of unregenerate men*: but I cannot pretend to do it in all the variety of circumstances which may attend it. I shall therefore mention only some particulars which are most important, and which most certainly demonstrate a person to be of that wretched number. There are a great variety of countenances in the human species; yet the principal features in all are the same, though their proportion and lineaments may differ: and I apprehend, the *characters* which I am now to lay down, will most of them suit *every unregenerate person*, though they may appear in various persons in different degrees and different instances. I shall chiefly lay down these characters in *negatives*, as I apprehend it is the safest way: and only would observe, what you may easily imagine, that *I speak only of the adult*; for I would cautiously avoid intangling this Discourse, with what relates purely to the case of *infants*, lest *Satan* should get an *advantage over us*, and turn that into an occasion to amuse *curiosity*, which I humbly hope, under the influence of the *spirit* of God, will be the means of *awakening conviction*, and of breaking that delu-

(f) 2 Tim. ii. 26.

sive *peccé*, in which, like *the strong man armed*; he keeps his vassals, till the fatal hour come which is to compleat their ruin.

To wave the formality of laboured demonstrations in a case which admits of such easy evidence, I shall go upon this obvious *principle* in the whole of my reasoning: "That to be *regenerate*, and to be *born of GOD*, are in scripture *terms of the same import*; and consequently, that whatever *temper* and *disposition* is in scripture declared to be *inconsistent* with the *character* of a *child of GOD*, must necessarily denominate a man an *unregenerate person*." And one would think *this principle* could hardly be disputed, since all that allow of *regeneration* at all, in a Christian sense, seem to understand by it *that change*, whatever it is, by which a person is made a *child of GOD*; and by consequence an *heir of heaven*.

Now on *this principle*, you may take the *marks* of an *unregenerate person* in such particulars as these; and let those, whose conscience own them, hear and tremble.

1. The soul "that never seriously enquired into its spiritual state," is, beyond all doubt, an *unregenerate soul*.

THE *Apostle* earnestly presses it upon the *Christians* to whom he wrote, that they should diligently *examine themselves whether they were in the faith* (g): and he who has entirely neglected to do it, seems to express, not merely a forgetfulness of religion, but even a contempt of it too. Nevertheless be it known unto you, Sirs, that an humble return to GOD, and a cordial dedication of soul to his service, is not so slight an act of a man's life, that it should pass without any observation in doing it,

(g) 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

or any serious reflection on having done it. *Religion* is a deliberate thing; it brings a man seriously to *consider his ways*, that he may *turn his feet to GOD's commandments* (h); to *search and try them*, that he may *turn again unto the Lord* (i). A good man is so impressed with the thoughts of GOD, and of Eternity, that perhaps he is rather ready to be over anxiously afraid and suspicious, in a matter of so great importance; and therefore will review, on the one hand, the plan of salvation that God has laid down in his word, and on the other, the correspondency to it that he may discover in his own soul. And if there are any of you that have never been thus employed, any that have never *separated yourselves* a while from other employments, *that you might seek and intermeddle with this Divine Wisdom* (k), you are assuredly strangers to it. If there are any of you, that have never studied GOD's word, to learn his will from thence; that have never attended to sermons, that you might try yourselves by them, and if possible, carry home something of the chief of what you hear, to assist your retired and more diligent enquiries; you may now come to a very quick conclusion, and before you leave this place, yea, before I proceed to any further particulars, you may set it down as the memorable beginning of these *Lectures*, and of this Discourse, "I am already  
 " proved to be an *unregenerate* creature: I am in  
 " *the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of ini-*  
 " *quity* (l)." Nay, you may add, that there are perhaps thousands of those that are yet *unregenerate sinners*, who have not been so careless and so insensible as you. For indeed, Sirs, a man may

(h) Psal. cxix. 59.

(i) Lam. iii. 40.

(k) Prov. xviii. 1.

(l) Acts viii. 23.

begin an *examination*, and start back from the prosecution of it, before it is brought to any important issue; or trying himself by *false characters*, he may come to a *conclusion*, which will be so much the more dangerous, as it has been the more deliberate. For the sake of such therefore, I add,

2. THE soul “that is not deeply convinced of  
“ its guilt before GOD, and desirous to seek  
“ deliverance from it by the *Lord Jesus*  
“ *Christ*,” is still in an *unregenerate state*.

ALL the promises of GOD’s paternal favour do certainly imply the promise of forgiveness; and you well know, that these are appropriated to such as *humble themselves* before GOD: and *that humbling* which is merely *external*, and implies no deep sense of *inward guilt*, can pass for very little with that GOD, who searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men (m).

THE Scripture assures us, that *whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God* (n); and nothing can be more certain from the whole tenor of it, than that *he that believes not, shall be damned* (o); and surely a state of *damnation* is not, and cannot be, a state of *regeneration*. But what is *this faith in Christ*? Is it no more than a bare notional persuasion; that he is *the Son of GOD*? If this were all, the *devils* themselves *believe* (p); and many were the instances, in which you know that they confessed it, and *trembled* before him. You cannot then be ignorant, that *the faith*, to which the promises of salvation are made, is a *faith*, which *receives the Lord Jesus Christ in all his offices*; which trusts his *atonement*, as well as admits his *revelation*; and flies to him for *righteous-*

(m) Jer. xvii. 10.

(n) 1 John v. 1.

(o) Mark xvi. 16.

(p) Jam. ii. 19.



*ness* and *life*. And how can that man seek *righteousness* from *Christ*, who is insensible of his own *guilt*? or how can he depend upon him for *life*, who is not aware that he is under a sentence of *death* and *condemnation*?

But imagine not you are secure, because you *acknowledge* yourselves to be *sinners*. If *that acknowledgment* be slight and formal, it shews you are strangers to the operation of that *spirit*, whose office it is to *convince* men of *sin* (q). If you have not been made sensible of the pollution of your hearts; as well as the rebellion of your lives; if you have not *received* as it were a *sentence of death* in yourselves, and submitted to that sentence as righteous, though ever so dreadful; if you have not been made to *loath* and *abhor* yourselves, and to *repent* in *dust* and *ashes* (r); if you have not *laid your hand on your mouth* (s), and *your mouth in the dust* (t), *crying out, Unclean, unclean* (u); and in this sense at least, adopted that pathetick complaint, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me* (w)! it is a certain sign, that *sin* still *reigns in your mortal bodies* (x), and is unto this day *bringing forth fruit unto death* (y.)

3. THE soul “that is unconcerned about the favour of GOD, and communion with him,” is still in an *unregenerate state*.

COMMON reason may tell you, that a soul destitute of the *love of GOD*, can never be the object of his complacential regards; and that it is impossible you should *love him*, while you are *unconcerned* about his *favour*, and habitually *indifferent* to converse with him. You believe, *there is a GOD*;

(q) John xvi. 8.

(r) Job xlii. 5.

(s) Mich. vii. 16.

(t) Lam. iii. 29.

(u) Lev. xiii. 46.

(w) Rom. vii. 24.

(x) Rom. vi. 12.

(y) Rom. vii. 5.

you acknowledge, that he is the great *benefactor* of the whole world; you know *your happiness* depends upon *his favour*; you *wish* therefore, that you may *enjoy it*; that is, you *wish*, that some way or other you may be *happy*, rather than *miserable*. But let conscience say, whether you have ever felt, that *in his favour is life* (z)? whether you have ever known, what it is to cry out with intenseness and ardour of soul, *Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me* (a)? Alas, Sirs, had you been sons, *GOD* would have *sent the spirit of his Son into your hearts* (b): and if this be not the sincere, if it be not the habitual language of your soul; if you do not thus earnestly desire to live under the manifestations of the divine love, and to be able to say, *truly our communion is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ* (c); you are spiritually *dead*, and under the fatal influences of that *carnal mind, which being enmity against GOD* (d), engages men to live contented *without GOD in the world* (e), so long as *their corn and their wine increase* (f). A heart thus *alienated from GOD*, was never savingly *turned to him*, and can have no just reason to imagine itself the object of his paternal favour.

4. THE soul “that is destitute of a sincere love “to mankind,” has reason to consider itself as in an *unregenerate state*.

You may, perhaps, think it unnecessary to mention this; but the *Apostle* was undoubtedly a much better judge, and his own words suggest this particular to me: *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of GOD; and every one that loveth, is*

(z) Psal. xxx. 5.

(a) Psal. iv. 6.

(b) Gal. iv. 6.

(c) 1 John i. 3.

(d) Rom. viii. 7.

(e) Eph. ii. 12.

(f) Psal. iv. 7.

born of GOD, and knoweth GOD: he that loveth not, knoweth not GOD, and consequently cannot be born of him; for GOD is love (g). And our Lord strongly intimates the same thought, when he exhorts his disciples to the most universal and unlimited benevolence by this argument, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven (h); plainly implying, that otherwise they could not really be born of GOD, or claim him for their father. Regeneration is to form a man for intimate communion with the general assembly and church of the first-born (i), and to prepare him for the region of compleat and everlasting love; and the first-fruits of it are to appear, and to be manifested here. It is a faithful saying, that they who have believed in GOD, should be careful to maintain good works (k); and unfeigned love is to be the root of them: so that if you cannot stand this trial, your religious hopes are all delusive and vain.

LET me intreat you therefore, that you would now look into your lives and hearts. Do any of the malignant passions harbour there? Ask yourselves, “Is there any of my fellow-creatures whom I wish to see miserable; or would make so, if it were in my power to do it by the secret act of my will, so that no mortal on earth should ever know me to be the cause of the calamity?” If it be so, and this be your settled temper, you hate your brethren, and are murderers (l); and therefore are the children of the Devil, who was a murderer from the beginning: and we may thus say of you, in the very words of our Lord, who never uttered a rash censure, You are of your father

(g) 1 John iv. 7, 8. (h) Mat. v. 45. (i) Heb. xii. 23.

(k) Tit. iii. 8. (l) 1 John iii. 15.

*the Devil; for his passions you cherish, and his lusts you would do (m).*

.. BUT reflect farther, If you *wish others no harm*, do you really *wish them well?* and that so really, and so sincerely, as to be ready to *do them good?* For merely to *say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled (n)*, when you have it in your power to help them, is at once to *mock the poor*, and to *despise him that made him (o)*. You that are conscious of a mean *selfish temper*, and wrap yourselves up, as it were, in your own separate interests, or in those of your own families, and can feel a concern for no others; you that *devise* what you may imagine shrewd and prudent things, but none that are *liberal* and compassionate; you whose *eye* does not *affect your heart*, when you *see the distresses of your brethren*, while you *have this world's good*, how *dwelleth the love of GOD in you (p)?* How can you imagine, you are the *children of him*, whom you so little resemble?

NAY, permit me to add once more upon this head, that if all your *compassion* is only moved by men's *temporal calamities*, and works not in any degree with respect to their *spiritual and eternal interests*, you have reason to fear, that it is no better than *an unsanctified humanity*; and indeed, that you never have learnt the worth of *your own souls*, while you set so little value on the *souls of others*, even of those, to whom you profess and intend friendship. And this concluding hint is of importance to prevent a dangerous mistake, in which too many *good-natured sinners* are ready to flatter themselves, and in which, perhaps, others are too ready to join in flattering them.

(m) John viii. 44.

(n) Jam. ii. 16.

(o) Prov. xvii. 5.

(p) 1 John iii. 17.

5. HE “that does not know what it is, to  
 “struggle with indwelling sin, and heartily  
 “to resolve against indulging it in any kind  
 “or degree,” is undoubtedly still in an *unre-*  
*generate state.*

You will observe, I do not say, “that every  
 “one who knows what it is, to feel a struggle  
 “in his own mind, when assaulted by temptations  
 “to sin, is a truly good man:” the contrary is  
 dreadfully apparent. A principle of *natural con-*  
*science* often makes very strong remonstrances  
 against *sin*, and sends out bitter cries when sub-  
 jected to its violence; and this is so far from deno-  
 minating a man *a real Christian*, that it rather il-  
 lustrates the *power of sin*, and aggravates *its guilt*.  
 But when a man’s inclinations run entirely *one*  
*way*, and when he gives a swing to his *natural*  
*passions* without any guard or restraint; when he  
 is a stranger to any *inward conflict* with himself,  
 and any *victory* over his own lusts, and his cor-  
 rupted will; it is a certain sign, he is yet under the  
 dominion of *Satan*, and is even to be numbered  
 among the tamest of his slaves. For *they that are*  
*Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with the affec-*  
*tions and lusts* (q); have learnt to *deny them-*  
*selves* (r), and to *mortify their members upon*  
*earth* (s).

It is also of great importance to add, that there  
 must be “a resolution to oppose sin in every kind,  
 “and in every degree:” for *he that is born of*  
*GOD sinneth not* (t); nay, it is elsewhere said,  
*He cannot commit sin* (u): and though it is too  
 visibly true in fact, and apparent from several other  
 passages in the very *Epistle* whence these words

(q) Gal. v. 24.

(r) Mat. xvi. 24.

(s) Col. iii. 5.

(t) 1 John v. 18.

(u) 1 John iii. 9.

are taken; that this expression is to be interpreted with *some limitation*; yet *the least* that it can be imagined to signify is *this*, that *he does not zealously allow himself in the practice of any sin*. He has learnt to *hate every false way*, and to *esteem all GOD's precepts, concerning all things, to be right* (w): so that upon the whole, *if he might have his request, and GOD would grant him the thing that he longs for* (x) it would be this; *to sin no more*, and to get rid of every sentiment, desire and affection, in any degree contrary to the purity of GOD's nature and law. If therefore there be any of you, *that spare one accursed thing*, though you should seem eager on destroying all the rest; if it be the secret language of your soul, "There is but *one lust*, that I will indulge; there is but *one temptation* that I will comply with;" I perceive *your hearts are not right in the sight of GOD* (y); for though you could, according to your pretended purpose, *keep all the rest of the law, and yet offend in this one point alone*, you would, in effect, be *a transgressor of all* (z). In short, *He that committeth sin, is of the Devil* (a); but *he that is begotten of GOD, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not* (b).

6. HE "that does not know what it is, to overcome this world, and to place his happiness in another," is yet in an *unregenerate state*.

THIS is another of those *certain marks*, which GOD has given us of his own children. *Whoever is born of GOD*, (as it is very emphatically expressed in the original) *overcometh the world* (c). It is not, you see, the extraordinary attainment of a few more eminent Christians; but it is an es-

(w) Psal. cxix. 128.      (x) Job vi. 8.      (y) Acts viii. 21.  
 (z) Jam. ii. 10.      (a) 1 John iii. 8.      (b) 1 John v. 18.  
 (c) 1 John v. 4. *πᾶν τὸ ὑπερνικῶμεν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου.*

essential branch of every good man's character: for he is begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, even to the hope of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away (d). You have reason therefore to judge very uncomfortably concerning your state, if you are strangers to this lively hope; which is a very different thing from that hope to be saved, of which some people talk in so indolent, not to say, in so profane a manner, as to shew, that it is the hope of the hypocrite; which will perish, when GOD takes away his soul (e). If you are conscious to yourselves, that you mind earthly things, your end will be destruction (f); for having your heart on earth, it is plain your only treasure is here (g): and if you govern yourselves by worldly maxims alone, and your great care be to obtain those riches and honours, which the children of the world pursue; if the importance of eternity has never appeared in such a light, as to make you judge every thing trifling that can come in competition with it; nay, whatever your views of eternity have been, if you are not practically carrying on a scheme for it; and if you cannot, and do not, deny your worldly interest, when it cannot be secured without hazarding your eternal hopes; it is plain you are friends of the world, in such a sense as none can be, but he must be an enemy of GOD (h). If indeed you were dead to the world, and your life hid with Christ in GOD, you would set your affections on things above, on those things which are there, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of GOD (i): but the want of this temper shews, that you are car-

(d) 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. (e) Job viii. 13. xxvii. 8. (f) Phil. iii. 19. (g) Mat. vi. 21. (h) Jam. iv. 4. (i) Col. iii. 1, 2, 3.

nally minded, which it is death to be (k); and that the redeeming love of Christ has never exerted its influence upon your souls, nor his cross had any due efficacy upon you; for if it had, *the world would have been crucified to you, and you to the world* (l).

7. THE soul “that does not long for greater improvements in the divine life,” is still a stranger to the *first principles* of it.

You know, that we are called, as *Christians*, with an *high and holy calling* (m); and as he that is the author of this calling, is *holy*, so are we to be *holy in all manner of conversation* (n), and to be *perfect, even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect* (o). Here will therefore be room for *improvement*, not only during our continuance in the present life, but through all the ages of a glorious eternity; and it is the ardent desire of every good man, that in this sense above all others, *his path may be like the shining light, that shineth more and more, until the perfect day* (p). And *this* is the *one thing* that he does, or that in which all his labours center; being conscious to himself how far he is from *having already attained, or being already perfect, forgetting the things that are behind, he reacheth forth unto those things that are before, and presses toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of GOD in Christ Jesus* (q). In this view he seriously considers the circumstances of life in which Providence has placed him; that he may observe the advantages, which these circumstances give him for religious improvements; and it is delightful to him to discover such advantages.

(k) Rom. viii. 6.

(l) Gal. vi. 14.

(m) Phil. iii. 14.

2 Tim. i. 9.

(n) 1 Pet. i. 15.

(o) Mat. v. 48.

(p) Prov.

iv. 18.

(q) Phil. iii. 12—14.

Now



Now if there be any of you, who know nothing of this temper; you are certainly in an *unregenerate state*: for none can be *born of GOD*; that do not *love him*; and none can truly *love him*, that does not earnestly desire, more and more to *resemble him*. So that if your hearts can indulge such a thought as this, “I wish I knew how much religion would be just sufficient to save me, and I would go so far, and stop there;” your conscience must tell you, that you secretly *hate religion*, and are unwillingly dragged toward the form of it, by an unnatural and external violence, the fear of misery and ruin in neglecting it; and that you are not acted by the free and liberal principle of a nature savingly renewed.

8. THE soul “that does not know what it is, to live by faith in *Christ*, and in dependance on his *spirit*,” is still in an *unregenerate state*.

WE are all the children of *GOD*, by Faith in *Christ Jesus* (r), if indeed we are so at all; and he that is joined to the Lord, in this sense, is one spirit with him (s). But if any man have not the spirit of *Christ*, he is none of his (t); for as *GOD* has predestinated us to the adoption of children, by *Jesus Christ*, to himself (u); so of his fulness it is, that all believers do receive, even grace for grace (w), or an abundance and variety of grace, by virtue of their union with him, who is the head; from whom the whole body, being fitly joined together, and strengthened by what every joint supplies, by an energy proportionable to every part, increases to the edifying of itself in love. (x). These things, as you see, are not only

(r) Gal. iii. 26.

(s) 1 Cor. vi. 17.

(t) Rom. viii. 9.

(u) Ephes. i. 5.

(w) John i. 16.

(x) Ephes. iv. 15, 16.

hinted in scripture, but are copiously insisted upon, as very material points: and though I readily acknowledge, good men may apprehend and consider them very differently, and may express those apprehensions in different phrases; yet as experience makes it plain, that those souls generally flourish most, who have the most distinct conceptions of them, and the most habitual regard to them; so I think it is plain from these Scriptures, that there can be no religion at all, where there is a total insensibility of them. If, therefore, there are any of you, that apprehend it is *enthusiasm* to talk of the *assistances of the Spirit*; nay, I will add, if there are any of you, that do not earnestly desire *these assistances*, and do not seek them daily from the hand of *Christ*, as the great *covenant-head* of his people; you are, I fear, strangers to some of the *first principles of the oracles of GOD* (y); and are *sensual, not having the spirit* (z). And though you may now and then form a hasty, and perhaps a warm resolution in religion, you will quickly, with *the proud youth*, that are conceited of their own sufficiency, *faint and be weary*, and with *the young men* you will utterly fail; while *they only that wait upon the LORD, shall renew their strength, shall mount up as on eagles wings, and, pressing on with an unwearied pace, according to the different degrees of vigour which the different parts of their course may require, shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint* (a). In short, if you do not *thirst after the water of life*, that is, (as the Evangelist himself explains it), *the spirit, which they that believe on Christ shall receive* (b), however bountiful he is, he makes no

(y) Heb. v. 12.

(z) Jude ver. 19.

(a) Isa. xl. 30, 31.

(b) John vii. 39.

promise to impart it to you; and if you never receive it, all your other sources of comfort will soon be dried up, and the miserable condition of the creature, that asked in vain for one drop of *water* to cool his tormented tongue (c), will certainly be yours.

HERE I apprehend multitudes will miscarry, who have *made a fair shew* in the eyes of men; and if you are condemned by *this mark*, I am sure you will not be acquitted by any of the *preceding*. For all the branches of an holy temper have such a connection with *this*, and such a dependance upon it, that a man, who is destitute of *this*, can have only the semblance of the rest.

AND thus, Sirs, I have, with all plainness and faithfulness, as in the sight of God, and sensible of my account to him, laid before you a variety of hints, by which I think you may safely and truly judge, whether you be, or be not, in an *unregenerate state*: and I shall now beg leave to conclude this Discourse with one plain *inference* from the whole, *viz.*

THAT *baptism* is not *regeneration*, in the scriptural and most important sense of the word.

To prove this as a *corollary* from the preceding Discourse, I shall only assume this most reasonable concession, with which you may remember I at first set out; “that *regeneration*, and *being born of GOD*, signify the same thing.” Now I have shewn you from a variety of *scriptures*, under the former heads, that *every one* whom the Sacred Oracles represent as *born of GOD*, *receiveth Christ*, *overcometh the world*, and *sinneth not*. But it is too plain, that *these characters* do not agree to *every one* that is *baptized*; and consequently it

(c) Luke. xvi. 24.

evidently follows, that *every one* who is *baptized* is not of course *born of GOD*, or *regenerate*; and therefore, that *baptism* is not *scripture regeneration*.

I THINK no *mathematical demonstration* plainer, and more certain than *this conclusion*; and therefore, whatever great and ancient names may be urged on the other side of the question, I shall rest the matter here, without leading you into the niceties of a controversy so easily decided. I would only further observe, that they who most vigorously contend for the other *manner of speaking* (for after all it is but a dispute about a *word*), acknowledge expressly, that a man may be *saved without* what they call *regeneration*, and that he may *perish with it*. And though persons are taught to speak of their state, in consequence of *baptism*, in very high, and, I fear, dangerous terms: yet when wise and good men come to explain those terms, it evidently appears, that many of whom they are used, are so *in a state of salvation* as to be daily obnoxious to *damnation*; so *the children of GOD*, as also to be *the children of the Devil*; and so *inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven*, as to be *children of wrath*, and on the brink of *hell*.

WHERE persons of real piety apprehend themselves under a *necessity* of using *such phrases* with respect to all that are *baptized*, we cannot blame them for endeavouring to bring down their signification, as low as possible: but they will, I hope, excuse those, who choose to speak, in what they apprehend to be a more scriptural, rational, and edifying language.

IT was matter of conscience with me, to state the matter as you have heard. I do therefore earnestly intreat you, my dearly beloved, in the name of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, and for the sake of your

own immortal *souls*, that you *deceive not yourselves with vain words*; but that where your eternal salvation is so plainly concerned, you bring the cause, the important cause, to an immediate trial: and if you are convinced, as I suppose many of you quickly may be, that you are at present *dead in trespasses and sins*, then let me beseech you to reflect on what the most transient survey of the Scripture may teach you, as to the *danger* of such a case. For though it will be my business, in the process of these Discourses, more largely to represent it, when I come to speak of *the necessity of the new birth*, GOD only knows, whether your lives may be continued, till we advance so far in the subject: and where a case of this kind is in question, the delay of a week, or even of a day, may be inevitable and eternal ruin.

## SERMON II.

Of the NATURE of REGENERATION, and particularly of the Change it produces in Men's Apprehensions.

2 COR. v. 17.

*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.*

THE knowledge of our true state in religion, is at once a matter of so great importance, and so great difficulty, that, in order to obtain it, it is necessary we should have *line upon line, and precept upon precept*. The plain Discourse which you heard last *Lord's day*, was intended to lead you into it; and I question not, but I then said enough to convince many, that they were in an *unregenerate* condition. Nevertheless, as there are various approaches towards *regeneration* and *conversion*, which on the whole fall short of it; I think it very expedient now to give you, what I may properly enough call *the counter-part* of this view; which I shall, by Divine Assistance, attempt from the words I have now been reading.

THE *Apostle*, who wrote them, was transported to such a zeal for *Christ*, and for the souls of men, that some thought him *beside himself* (a);

(a) Ver. 13,

and no doubt many would represent him, as the greatest enthusiast upon the face of the earth. But as it was *a very small thing to him to be judged of man's judgment* (b), he calmly vindicates himself, by declaring that there was a *cause* for all this warmth, as the honour of God, and the Redeemer, and the eternal salvation of men, were so intimately concerned in the affair: *The love of Christ*, says he, *constrains us* (c), or (as the word\* properly signifies) *it bears us away with it*, like a mighty torrent, which we are not able to resist; *because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead*, under the sentence of God's righteous law, or they would not have needed such an atonement as the blood of his Son; *and we farther judge, that he died for all, that they who now live, only in consequence of his dying love, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them* (d). We therefore *live* to this Jesus; we consecrate our lives and labours to this purpose; and in consequence of it, *we henceforth know no man after the flesh*, that is, we do not regard our temporal interests, nor consider how we may most effectually obtain the favour and friendship of those who may be useful to us in life; *yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh*, or have expected a *temporal Messiah*, who should make our nation triumphant over the *Gentiles*, and enrich it with the spoils of other nations, *yet now henceforth we know him no more* under such a character (e). And in this respect the same temper will prevail in the heart of every real *Christian*; and therefore, i. e. in consequence of what was said before of the Redeemer's love, *if any man be in Christ*, if he be

(b) 1 Cor. iv. 3.

(c) 2 Cor. v. 14.

\* ΣΥΝΕΧΕΙ.

(d) 2 Cor. v. 15.

(e) Ver. 16.

really one of his faithful servants, united to him by a lively faith, and in consequence of that union interested in his salvation, *he is a new creature*; his views and sentiments, his affections and pursuits, are so entirely changed, that he seems, as it were, to be *come into a new world*, and to be transformed quite into another person from what he formerly was: *old things are passed away*, and (*behold the astonishing transformation!*) *all things are become new*. This is the thought that I am now to illustrate; and you cannot but see, how proper a foundation it will be for our Discourse on the *second general* I proposed, which is,

SECONDLY, Particularly to describe the *nature* of that great *change*, which passes on every soul, that is truly *regenerate*, in the scriptural, and most important sense of the word\*.

AND here it may hardly seem necessary to tell you, that I do not mean to assert, that the substance of the soul, and its natural faculties, are in a strict and proper sense *changed*: a man might as reasonably assert from such a Scripture, that the former body was annihilated, and a new one produced; and common sense and decency will not allow us to imagine, that the *Apostle* meant any thing of this nature, by the general terms he uses here. But the plain meaning is, that when a man becomes a real *Christian*, the whole temper and character of his mind is so *changed*, as to become *different* from

\* Some chuse to call *the change* here described, *renovation* rather than *regeneration*. I have given my reasons before (*pag. 8, 22.*) why I use the words *promiscuously*: but I shall endeavour, through the whole of these Discourses, so to state the *nature* of this *change*, as to have no controversy with good men of any persuasion about any thing but the *name* of it; concerning which, I hope, they will not contend with me, as I am sure I will not quarrel with them.



that of the generality of mankind, and *different* from what it formerly was, while in an unenlightened and unrenewed state. It is not merely a little circumstantial alteration; it is not assuming a new name, professing new speculative opinions, or practising some new rites and forms: but it is becoming, (as we frequently say in our usual forms of speech) *a different creature, or a new man*.—And thus the sacred writers express themselves in many other passages, which very happily serve to illustrate this: They, in particular, represent *GOD* as promising, with relation to this work (f); *a new heart will I give them; and a new spirit will I put within them; and I will take away the heart of stone, the stubborn, obstinate, impenetrable disposition they once had, and will give them an heart of flesh, a tender, compliant temper, which shall incline them to submit to my will with humility, and to obey it with delight.* And thus, when the *Apostle* had exhorted the *Ephesians* (g) to *put off, with respect to their former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to its deceitful lusts;* he adds, *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after GOD, or in conformity to his image, is created in righteousness and true holiness:* which is further illustrated by his important exhortation to the *Romans* (h), *Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.* And on the same principles, what in one place he calls *the new creature* (i), in another parallel place he expresses, by *faith that works by love* (k), and by *keeping the commandments of GOD* (l); for all these, as equivalent characters, he opposes to *circumcision and uncircumcision, or to*

(f) Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

(g) Ephes. iv. 22—24.

(h) Rom.

xii. 2. (i) Gal. vi. 15.

(k) Gal. v. 6.

(l) 1 Cor. vii. 19.

the mere externals of a religious profession; declaring the utter insufficiency of the latter, and the absolute necessity of the former.

THE general *nature* of this *change* may then be understood, by an attentive consideration of such *Scriptures* as those mentioned above; which indeed contain what is most essential on this subject. But for the more complete illustration of the matter, I shall particularly shew you, that where there is reason to speak of a man, as one of those who are *in Christ Jesus*, or who are truly *regenerate*, there will be “New apprehensions, new affections, new resolutions, new labours, new enjoyments, and new hopes:” and perhaps there are few important branches of the *Christian character*, which may not be introduced, as illustrating one or other of these remarks.

THE former of them is indeed the foundation of the rest; because, as religion is a *reasonable service*, all the *change* which is made in the *affections* and *resolutions*, in the *pursuits*, *enjoyments* and *hopes* of a good man, arises from that *different view*, in which he is now taught to look on those objects, the nature of which is to direct his choice, to determine his conduct, and regulate his passions: it will therefore be the business of this evening’s Discourse to shew you,

I. THAT wherever there is a real principle of *regeneration*, there will be *new APPREHENSIONS* of things.

WHEN GOD created the natural world, *he said*, in the very *beginning* of his work, *Let there be light; and there was light* (m): and thus he deals in this *new creation*, which raises the soul from a *chaos*, to such a beautiful, well-ordered, and well-furnished frame. *GOD*, says the Apostle, *who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has*

(m) Gen. i. 3.

*shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD, in the face of Jesus Christ (n); whereas before, the understanding was darkened, being alienated from the life of GOD, through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness or perverseness of their hearts (o).*

Now *this illumination*, of which I am speaking, does not so much refer to a *speculative*, as to a *practical* and heart-impressing *knowledge*. It is true, that when a man once comes to be in good earnest in religion, he generally arrives at a clearer and fuller *knowledge*, even of the *doctrines* of *Christianity*, than he had before: for he then sets himself to enquire with greater diligence, and to seek light of the great *Father of Lights* with greater earnestness; he gets clear of many evil affections, that put a corrupt bias upon his judgment; and he comes within the reach of those promises, *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord (p); and if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of GOD (q).* Yet, I think, I may very properly say, that at various times, when our *judgment* of any object is the same, our *apprehensions* of it are very different. It is one thing, for instance, to believe that GOD is the omnipotent, all-wise, and all-gracious governor of the world; and another, and very different thing, to have the heart powerfully impressed with an *apprehension* of his ability and readiness to help us. I will, therefore, a little more particularly illustrate those respects, in which the *apprehensions* of such as are really *regenerate*, differ from those which they formerly had: and I hope you will do yourselves the justice to reflect, as we go along, how far you have ever felt *these apprehensions* which you

(n) 2 Cor. iv. 6.

(o) Ephes. iv. 18.

(p) Hos. vi. 3.

(q) John vii. 17.

hear me describe; and I have a pleasing persuasion, that many of you have felt them, in a much livelier manner than they can be described. I would observe then to you, that a *regenerate* soul has *new apprehensions* “ of *GOD*,—of *itself*,—of *Christ*, “ —of *eternity*,—and of *the way and method* that “ *GOD* has marked out for its being *happy* there.”

1. A *regenerate* soul has *new apprehensions* “ of “ the blessed *GOD*.”

THERE are very few who pretend so much as to *doubt* of the *being* of a *GOD*; and fewer yet, that will venture to *deny* it: and even among those, who have denied it, and disputed against it, some, by their own confession, have felt their hearts give them the lie, and upbraid them for using the powets of reason and speech against the Giver and Preserver of both. I persuade myself at least, there are none that hear me this day, who would not look upon a professed *Atheist* as a monster, unworthy to be a member of human society, and little to be trusted in any of its relations. Yet after all, while the *being* of the blessed *GOD* is warmly asserted, his *nature* is so little understood and considered, that there are thousands who may still properly be said to be *without GOD in the world* (r), or in practice and temper, though not in notion, to be *Atheists* in it. Wicked men therefore, in general, are described as those that *know not GOD* (s): but where *GOD* has determined to glorify his mercy in the salvation of a sinner, he *shines into the heart* for this blessed purpose, *to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD* (t). And thus the glories of the Divine Being are known to the *regenerate* soul in such a manner, as they are not to the most acute metaphysician, or the sublimest philosopher, who is himself a stranger to the spiritual life.

(r) Eph. ii. 12.

(s) 2 Thess. i. 8.

(t) 2 Cor. iv. 6.

THE person of whom we now speak, has *new apprehensions* “ of the *spirituality* and *omnipresence* of *GOD*,—of his *majesty* and *purity*,—of his *power* and *patience*,—of his *goodness*, and his *intimate access to men’s spirits*, with the reality and importance of his *operations* upon them.”—Permit me a little to represent the *views* of each, both to direct your enquiries, and also to impress your minds, and my own, with truths in which we have all so intimate a concern.

THE divine *spirituality* and *omnipresence* is apprehended by the good man in a peculiar manner. That there is some *immaterial substance*, and that *matter* is moved by his active power continually impressed upon it, according to stated laws, is indeed so plain a dictate of reason, that I question not but the thought influences the minds of some, who have not so much acquaintance with language as to be able properly to express it: but, alas! it easily passes through, as if no way important. It is quite a different thing to *feel*, as it were, the presence of an infinitely intelligent and all-observing Deity, actually surrounding us in all times and places;—to say from the heart, *Oh, Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me, so that thou understandest my thoughts afar off: whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me* (u);—to *feel*, as it were, the *hand of GOD*, which indeed we may *feel*, if we duly attend to it, in all the impressions made on our bodily senses, and on the powers of our mind;—to *feel* ourselves even now supported by it, and to argue from the constant support of his *hand*, the neverfailing notice of his *eye*. “ He reads my pre-

(u) Psal. cxxxix. 1—7.

“ sent thoughts ; he knows, even now, all the se-  
 “ crets of my soul, and has always known them ;  
 “ has always observed my conduct in every the  
 “ minutest particular ; and recorded, in permanent  
 “ characters, the whole history of my life, and of  
 “ my heart ; of this depraved sinful life, of this vain,  
 “ this treacherous, this rebellious heart.”

WITH this conception of the Divine observance are closely and intimately connected *new apprehensions* of the *purity of GOD*, and of his infinite *Majesty* ; views, which mutually assist and illustrate each other. The irreverence with which the generality of men behave in the presence of GOD, and the easiness with which they admit the slightest temptation to sin against him, plainly shew what low notions they have of him : but GOD does, as it were, appear to the eye of a renewed mind, arrayed in his robes of light and majesty ; so that he is ready to cry out, “ *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the*  
 “ *ear, but now mine eye seeth thee (w) : I see the*  
 “ *eternal, self-existent, self-sufficient GOD, who*  
 “ *sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabi-*  
 “ *tants there are as grasshoppers ; who spread-*  
 “ *eth out the Heavens as a tent to dwell in, and*  
 “ *looks down on the nations as the drop of a*  
 “ *bucket, and counts them as the small dust of*  
 “ *the balance (x) : who would not fear before him ?*  
 “ *who would not tremble at his presence (y) ? who*  
 “ *would not revere that GOD, who is of purer eyes*  
 “ *than to behold evil, and cannot look upon ini-*  
 “ *quity (z) ; who cannot be tempted with evil (a),*  
 “ *but must see it, and hate it, even in all its forms ?”*

AND such too are the *views* it has of his *almighty power*, that the enlightened mind will fur-

(w) Job xiii. 5.

(x) Isa. xl. 15, 22.

(y) Jer. v. 22.

(z) Hab. i. 13.

(a) Jam. i. 13.

ther add, “ A GOD of *almighty power*, who could  
 “ speak a whole world into ruin (undoubtedly he  
 “ could, for he spoke it into existence); who by  
 “ one single thought, by one silent volition, could  
 “ easily abase the proudest creature in the universe;  
 “ must have it in his power to *bring me* in a mo-  
 “ ment *to the dust of death*, and to the flames of  
 “ *hell*; to lay me as low in misery, and to hold  
 “ me as long in it as he should please: “ *This, O*  
 “ my soul, *this is the GOD*, against whom such  
 “ feeble worms as we are daily offending, and  
 “ whom we madly presume to make our enemy.”

THIS gives the *regenerate* man a further *sense*  
 of the *patience of GOD*, than ever he had before.  
 Others may look round upon the world, and wonder  
 there is so much *penal evil* in it; but the renewed  
 soul wonders there is not a thousand times more.  
 When he sees, how *the world lieth in wickedness*  
 (b); when he observes, how poor impotent mortals  
 are, many of them perhaps, in words blaspheming  
 the GOD of Heaven; many more of them, most  
 presumptuously violating all the plainest and most  
 important precepts of his law; and most of the rest,  
 living in a perpetual forgetfulness of him, as if he  
 were not at all, or were not so considerable as  
 to be any way worth their notice; such an one  
 cannot but wonder, that the Almighty Majesty of  
 Heaven does not in a moment, make himself known  
 by the *thunder of his power*, and confound all their  
 madness and folly, by crushing the world with its  
 inhabitants into ruin. He often sees the *rising sun*,  
 and the *descending rain*, with astonishment that it  
 should be sent down on such a world as ours.

HE has also more affecting *views* than ever of  
 the *Divine Goodness*. Most men speculatively

(b) 1 John v. 19.

believe it; and they take occasion, even from that belief, to affront it: but a good man views it at once as a delightful, and a venerable thing: he *fears the Lord and his goodness* (c); and while it encourages him, guilty as he is, to repose himself upon it as his hope, it awakens a generous kind of confusion at the thought of ever having offended him, and fills his very soul with indignation at the thought of repeating such offences.

AND once more, the *regenerate* man has quite different *notions* than before, of the *intimate access which GOD has to the spirits of men*, and his important *power of operating upon them*. The greatest part of men indeed consider not, as they ought, how the whole *material world* perpetually depends upon a *Divine Agency*, and is no other than one grand *machine*, on which the great artificer continually acts, to make it an instrument of mercy to his sensitive and intelligent creatures. But there are yet fewer, who seriously consider, how entirely *the hearts of men are in the hand of the Lord*, and how much depends on his influences upon them. Nevertheless, experience teaches the renewed soul, that *he is the GOD of the spirits of all flesh* (d); and that he not only views, but manages them as he pleases. “ Lord,” does he say, “ this  
 “ spirit of mine is shaded with thick darkness, but  
 “ thou canst illuminate it; it is diseased, but thou  
 “ canst cure it; it is *unstable as water* (e), and  
 “ lighter than a feather, yet thou canst fix and es-  
 “ tablish it; and whatever thou wouldest have me  
 “ to be, and to do, for thy glory, and mine own  
 “ happiness, thou canst *work in me both to will*  
 “ *and to perform* it (f): so that all I need, to the

(c) Hos. iii. 5.

(d) Numb. xxvii. 16.

(e) Gen. xlix. 4.

(f) Phil. ii. 13.



“ rectitude and felicity of my nature, is only this,  
 “ that I may have more of thine inward, vital, ope-  
 “ rative presence.” It is not easy to conceive,  
 what efficacy this thought has, for the transformation  
 of the soul. But again,

2. NEW *apprehensions* are connected with these  
 sentiments in the *regenerate* soul, “ concern-  
 “ ing *itself*, and its own state.”

It is surprising to think, how many run through  
 successive years in life, without ever turning the eye  
 of his mind *inward*, that the soul may *survey itself*.  
 I speak not of a *philosophical survey* of the facul-  
 ties of the mind; which, though indeed in its place  
 it be useful and entertaining, is no more necessary in  
 its refinements to a well-ordered state, than skill in  
*anatomy* is to a healthful constitution: but I speak  
 of *those views of the mind*, which are in the reach  
 of all, how low soever their genius, or their educa-  
 tion may have been.

As all true Happiness is an internal thing wherever  
 GOD intends to produce it in the heart of a revolted  
 corrupted creature (and such, alas! we all naturally  
 are), he leads it into a *view of itself*; and shews it  
 (if I may be allowed the expression), a mixture of  
*grandeur* and *misery*, that lies within; which yet  
 the greatest part of mankind live and die without  
 ever observing. “ I am here,” does the awakened  
 Creature say, “ *an intelligent being*; far superior  
 “ to this well-wrought frame of flesh and blood,  
 “ which GOD has given me for a little while to  
 “ command, and which I must quickly drop in the  
 “ dust: I am made capable of determining my own  
 “ choice, of directing my own actions, of judg-  
 “ ing concerning the importance of ends, and the  
 “ propriety of means in subserviency to them: and  
 “ while I see a vast variety of creatures in different  
 “ forms beneath me, I see no rank of creatures

“ above me, nothing nobler than *man*, here on  
 “ earth, where I dwell. Yet I see *man*, in the  
 “ midst of his glory, a *feeble, dependent, mortal*  
 “ *creature*, who cannot possibly be his own end,  
 “ nor can of himself alone, by any means command  
 “ or insure his own happiness.—Every thing tells  
 “ me, that he is *the creature of GOD*; and that  
 “ it is his greatest honour and felicity, to know,  
 “ and practically to acknowledge himself to be so:  
 “ every thing tells me, that it is most reasonable,  
 “ that *GOD*, who is the great *original of man*,  
 “ should also be *the end of his being*: but have I  
 “ made him *the end of mine*? My soul, thou art  
 “ conscious to thyself, thou hast lived in many in-  
 “ stances *without him in the world* (g).—He has  
 “ given thee, even in the system of thine own na-  
 “ ture, and of the visible beings that are round about  
 “ thee, compared with his providential interposition in  
 “ the management of them, the *intimations of his*  
 “ *holy and righteous will*: he has expressed *these*  
 “ *dictates* far more plainly in his *written word*:  
 “ and when thou comest to examine them, how art  
 “ thou condemned by them? When thou comest  
 “ to think of the *spirituality* and *purity* of his  
 “ *being*, and his *law*, how shameful does thy tem-  
 “ per, and thy life, appear to have been? what an  
 “ infinite disproportion is there between that, and  
 “ its perfect rule!—And whom, oh my soul, hast  
 “ thou offended? whose *law* hast thou broken?  
 “ whose *grace* hast thou despised? The *law*, the  
 “ *grace* of that eternal *GOD*, of whom I have  
 “ now been hearing: who is here *present with*  
 “ *me*, who is even *within me*, and who *sees*, oh  
 “ my heart, (more distinctly than thou canst see)  
 “ *all thy guilt*, and all its aggravations. Oh

(g) Eph. ii. 12.

“ Lord!

“ Lord! *I abhor myself, and repent in dust and*  
 “ *ashes* (h). I have talked of *sin*, and of the *sen-*  
 “ *tence of GOD* against it, as a thing of course:  
 “ but oh, my soul, it is thine own concern! The  
 “ *guilt*, the *stain of sin* is still upon thee; the  
 “ *sentence of GOD* is pronounced against thee;  
 “ and it must be *reversed*, or thou art undone for  
 “ ever. These *irregular habits and disposition*:  
 “ that prevail in thee, must be *corrected*, or they  
 “ will prove thy mortal disease, and everlasting  
 “ torment.—Thou art a *poor, weak, irresolute*  
 “ *creature*; the experience of every past day of  
 “ life, since I began to think of religion at all,  
 “ proves it: yet thou must, by some means or  
 “ other, attain to *inward strength and inward*  
 “ *purity*, or thou art lost; and all these *great ca-*  
 “ *pacities*, and *glorious faculties*, will but make  
 “ thy ruin so much the more distinguished. Oh  
 “ how weighty the care! oh how great the  
 “ charge! What shall I do, that *thought*, that  
 “ *reason*, that *immortality*, may not be my de-  
 “ struction? Where shall I find a *rock*, that will  
 “ be firm enough for my support and safety? where  
 “ shall I find the *means*, to build the fabric of such  
 “ a *happiness*, as thine, oh my soul! must be, if  
 “ ever I am happy at all?”

THUS does GOD teach the mind, by its inward  
 reviews and reflections, this important lesson of  
 its own impotence and guilt, of its depravity and  
 ruin; and so prepares it for those *new apprehen-*  
*sions of Christ*, which I mentioned as the *third*  
 particular.

3. THE *regenerate* soul has *new apprehensions*  
 “ concerning the *Lord Jesus Christ*, consi-  
 “ dered as a *mediator* in general, and as such

(h) Job xlii. 6.

“ a par-

“ a particular *mediator* as he is exhibited in  
“ the word of GOD.”

THAT affecting *view*, which the *regenerate* soul has of the *majesty, glory, power, and purity* of the blessed *GOD*, will undoubtedly convince him how unfit he is *in himself* to appear before his awful presence. He is ready to sink down in the dust at the very thought, and to say, “ *Who is able to stand before such a great and holy GOD, as thou art (i)? If I were in all the original rec- titude and glory of my nature, I could not do it: how much less, surrounded as I am, with so much guilt, with so much pollution! I need, as it were, a day’s-man betwixt us, who might lay his hand upon us both (k), who should transact affairs in my name with GOD, and bring the peaceful messages of GOD to me: let such an one speak with me, and I will hear; but let not GOD speak with me, lest I die (l).*”

AND when he comes to take a more near and intimate *view* of this *Mediator* which GOD has exhibited in the gospel, the renewed soul is even charmed and transported with the *view*: and that *JESUS*, whose *name* he before pronounced with so much coldness, that the very mention of it was a kind of profanation, now is regarded by him as *the chiefest among ten thousand (m)*. He beholds *his glory*, as that of *the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (n)*. The union of the *divine* and *human nature* in the person of *Christ*, though it appears indeed a *mystery*, which he cannot fully explain, is nevertheless a glorious *certainty*, which in the general he most cordially believes. He sees *Emmanuel, GOD dwelling with*

(i) 1 Sam. vi. 20.      (k) Job ix. 33.      (l) Exod. xx. 19.  
(m) Cant. v. 10.      (n) John i. 14.

us in human flesh, and acquiesces in the sight; while the rays of Divine Glory are attempered by passing *through the veil, that is to say, his flesh* (o): He considers *Christ as made of GOD* unto him *wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption* (p): and each of these *views* rejoices him to the very heart. “*Ignorant* as I am, I shall  
 “ be taught and instructed *by him*, that great *Prophet*, whom GOD sent into the world; *by him*,  
 “ who is *incarnate wisdom*, as well as *incarnate love*; whose words resound in the gospel, and  
 “ whose *spirit* seals the instructions of his word.  
 “ *Guilty* as I am, my crimes shall be expiated; for  
 “ there is *redemption in his blood*, even *the forgiveness of sins* (q): there is an *everlasting*  
 “ *righteousness* that he has introduced: and oh,  
 “ how richly will it adorn my soul!—This *pollution* of mine shall not for ever exclude me from  
 “ a comfortable intercourse with the pure Majesty  
 “ of Heaven; for *Christ* is come to be my *sanctification*; and he can cleanse me by his *spirit*,  
 “ and transform me into that divine, delightful  
 “ image which I have lost.—Victorious Lord, how  
 “ easily canst thou *redeem me* from that state of  
 “ servitude, in which I have been kept so long  
 “ complaining! How easily, and how powerfully,  
 “ canst thou vindicate me *into the glorious liberty*  
 “ *of the children of GOD* (r)!—Blessed *Jesus*,  
 “ thou art my *light* and my *strength*, my *hope*  
 “ and my *joy*! Thou art just *such a Saviour* as  
 “ my necessity requires; thou fillest up all my  
 “ wants, and all my wishes; thou art *all in all* to  
 “ me! I would not be ignorant of thee for ten  
 “ thousand worlds; I would not live a day, nor

(o) Heb. x. 20.

(p) 1 Cor. i. 30.

(q) Eph. i. 7.

(r) Rom. viii. 21.

“ an hour, without recollecting who, and what  
 “ thou art, and maintaining that intercourse with  
 “ thee, which is the *life* of my soul.”

4. THE *regenerate* soul has also *new apprehen-  
 sions* “ of the importance of *eternity*, when  
 “ compared with time and all its concerns.”

IT is indeed a most pitiable thing, and awakens  
 our astonishment, grief, and indignation, to ob-  
 serve how the *things of this world* press down im-  
 mortal spirits; and reduce them almost indeed to a  
 state of brutality. Most deplorable it is, to see the  
 power and energy of those motives, which are taken  
 merely from *this earth*, and its little concernments;  
 so that if a man did but know what was the *fa-  
 vourite vanity*, he might almost predict, from the  
 knowledge of circumstances, how a man's actions  
 would be ordered; and might almost be sure that  
 he would follow, whithersoever this *interest*, or  
 that *pleasure*, this *ambitious*, or that *mercenary  
 view*, called him; though all the prospects of an  
*eternal world* pleaded the contrary way. Such is  
 the *folly* and *madness* that is in *men's hearts*  
*while they live*; and after that, they go down to  
*the dead* (s), and spend that immortal duration,  
 which they have despised, in fruitless lamentations.  
 Fatal delusion! which it is the great design of the  
 gospel to cure.

BUT when a soul becomes *wise to salvation*, it  
 is taught to *look not at the things which are seen*,  
*but at the things which are not seen*; because it  
 has now a full sense of what before it only notional-  
 ally confessed, that *the things which are seen, are  
 temporal*; but *the things which are not seen, are  
 eternal* (t).—ETERNITY! it is impossible I should  
 tell you, how much an eye, that is enlightened by

(s) Eccles. ix. 3.

(t) 2 Cor. iv. 18.

GOD, sees, and reads, as it were, in that *one word*; while one scene beyond another is still opening on the mind, till its sight and its thoughts are swallowed up: and as the creatures are as *nothing* with respect to GOD, so all the interests of *time*, with respect to *eternity*, appear *as less than nothing and vanity* (u). To be made for an *everlasting existence* appears in so awful a view, that while it has some pleasing *hope*, it *rejoices with trembling*; and every remaining *fear*, with relation to this great interest, seems a greater evil, than the *certainty* of any *temporal calamity*.

I MIGHT add upon this head, that the *regenerate* soul has not only *new views* of the *importance*, but likewise of the *nature* of the *invisible* and *eternal state*; and particularly of the *nature* of the *celestial happiness*. It does not consider it merely, or chiefly, as a state of corporeal enjoyment, formed to gratify and delight the senses; but as a state of perfect conformity to GOD, and most endearing intercourse with him; of which, as it begins already by Divine Grace to taste the pleasures, so it most ardently thirsts after them; and would be heartily willing to lose this body for ever, and to bid an eternal adieu to every object capable of giving it delight; rather than it would consent to lose, in a perpetual succession of such objects, the sight of the *Father of Spirits*, and that sensibility of his love, which adds the most substantial solidity, and exalted relish, to every inferior good that can be desired from it.

5. A *regenerate* man has also *new apprehensions* “of the way which GOD has marked  
“out to this happiness.”

NOTHING is more common than for carnal and ignorant men to imagine, that it is a very easy thing

(u) Isa. xl. 17.

to get to Heaven; and upon this presumption, they *hew out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water* (w); and often live and die with *a lye in their right hand* (x). But the renewed soul, having such awful *notions* of the blessed *GOD*, and such *apprehensions* of the excellency and glory of the *heavenly state*, as you have heard, deeply feels how absolutely necessary it is, that something of a very great and important *change* should pass in the mind of that sinful creature, that ever hopes to be a partaker of it. He sees, that it is impossible, any external profession, or external rite, should secure so great an end; impossible, that *baptism* should be *regeneration*, in that sense in which the Scripture uses the word, or that by this alone, though ever so regularly administered, a man's eternal happiness should be secured. He sees, that to be associated to this or that *party of Christians*, to join with *established*, or with *separate churches*, and to be ever so zealous for their respective order, worship, and discipline, is a thing quite of foreign consideration here; and that the best, or the worst of men, may be, and probably are, on one side, and on another; nay, that ignorance, pride, and bigotry may take occasion from hence, to render men *farther from the kingdom of GOD*, than any mistake in judgment or practice, on these disputed points, could have set them.

No, my brethren, when a man's eyes are enlightened by *GOD's renewing spirit*, he sees and feels that, in the language of Scripture, he must be *created anew in Christ Jesus* (y): he sees, that *holiness* is a character *without which no man shall*

(w) Jer. ii. 13.

(x) Isa. xliv. 20.

(y) Eph. ii. 10.



see the Lord (z); and he is perhaps little anxious, whether *this*, or the *faith* that produces it, shall be called a *condition*, or a *qualification*, or an *instrument*, while he sees he must perish without it: he sees, that as it is absolutely *necessary*, so it is very *extensive*, as *the commandment*, which is its rule, is *exceeding broad* (a): he sees, that it must not only effectually regulate the *actions* of his *life*, but controul all the *sentiments* of his *heart*: nay, he sees, it must not only be submitted to as a *necessary*, but be chosen as a most *amiable* thing: and, accordingly, he does *chuse it* as such.—The *unregenerate* soul, when he hears of *repentance* and *reformation*, though he understands not half that it means, nor is aware of what will, in fact, be the greatest difficulty of it, looks upon it at best as a *nauseous medicine*, which he must take, or die: but the *regenerate* man finds his heart so wonderfully and so happily *changed*, that he regards it for itself, as the food, the health, and the life of his soul; as that which necessarily brings *its own pleasures*, and, in a considerable degree, *its own reward* along with it; so that now, as *David* beautifully expresses it, *He openeth his mouth, and panteth, because he longs for GOD's commandments* (b).

AND I will add once more, the good man is also made sensible of *the place which faith and holiness hold*, in the scheme which GOD has laid, for our justification before him, and our *acceptance* with him. I do not say, that *all Christians* conceive of this with equal perspicuity, or express their conceptions with equal exactness: the most candid allowance should here be made for the *different ideas* they fix to the *same phrases*, as they

(z) Heb. xii. 14.

(a) Psal. cxix. 96.

(b) Ver. 131.

have

have been used to look upon them with veneration, or with suspicion. - But this I will venture to say, because I am persuaded the Scripture will bear me out in it, “that the confidence of a regenerate soul is not fixed on *his own holiness*, or *faith*, as the meritorious cause of his acceptance with God.” He is deeply and cordially sensible, that *he is made accepted in the Beloved* (c); and seeing nothing but guilt, and weakness, and ruin in himself, he ascribes to the blessed *Jesus*, and to the riches of God’s *free grace* in him, his righteousness, his strength, and his salvation. And where a man is thus persuaded, I think he must, in effect, believe, even though he might scruple in words expressly to own it, “that *Christ*, as our great surety, having perfectly obeyed the law of GOD himself, and by his blood having fully satisfied the Divine Justice for the breach of it, we, on our believing in him by a vital faith, are justified before GOD by the imputation of his perfect righteousness.” This latter way of stating it, when rightly explained, appears just equivalent to the former; and it is a manner of conceiving and expressing it, which, when rightly understood, seems extremely suitable to that deep *humility*, and *poverty of spirit*, to which the renewed soul is brought, when, *like a new-born babe*, it desires the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby (d). But as the mind, at such a time, finds little inclination to contend about words and phrases, it would be much less proper for me, to enter into any controversy about them here.

LET it suffice for the present, that I have given you this plain representation of *that change*, which is wrought in a man’s *apprehensions*, when he is

(c) Eph. i. 6.      (d) 1 Pet. ii. 2.

made a *new creature*. When *old things* are passed away, he has *new apprehensions* of *GOD*, of *himself*, of *Christ*, of *eternity*, and of *the way* to obtain the *happiness* of it: and as at this happy time *all things* are become *new*, there are “new affections, new resolutions, new labours, new enjoyments, and new hopes,” which are the result of the *change* already described. But it will be much more difficult to reduce what I have to offer on *these heads*, within the bounds of the *next Discourse*, than proper to attempt any of them in *this*. Go home, my friends, and try yourselves by what you have already heard; and be assured, that if you are *condemned* by this part of the description, it is impossible you should be *approved* by any that will follow; since they have all their foundation in this.

## SERMON III.

Of the NATURE of REGENERATION, with respect to the Change it produces in Men's Affections, Resolutions, Labours, Enjoyments, and Hopes.

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2 COR. v. 17.

*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.*

AMONG the various subjects, which exercise the thoughts and tongues of men, few are more talked of than *religion*. But it is melancholy to think how little it is understood; and how much it is mistaken and misrepresented in the world. The *text* before us gives us a very instructive view of it; such a view, that I am sure, an experimental knowledge of its sense would be infinitely preferable to the most critical and exact knowledge of all the most curious passages, both of the *Old Testament*, and the *New*. From it, you know, I have begun to describe that great *change*, which the word of GOD teaches us to represent under the notion of *regeneration*, or, according to the language of St. Paul, in this passage of his writings, by a *new creation*. I know I am explaining it before many, who have been much longer acquainted with it than myself; and it becomes me to believe, before many that

that

that have attained much higher advancements in it : but I fear also at the same time, I speak of it before many, who are yet strangers to it ; and I am labouring, by the plainest addresses that I can, to give them at least some just ideas of it. Oh, that to all the descriptions that either have, or shall be given, GOD may, by his grace, add that understanding which arises from feeling correspondent impressions on the mind !

I HAVE already endeavoured to illustrate those *new apprehensions*, which arise in the *regenerate* mind ; *apprehensions* of the blessed *GOD*, of *itself*, of *Christ*, of the *eternal world*, and of *the way* to obtain the *happiness* of it. It now remains, that I consider those “ new affections, resolutions, labours, enjoyments, and hopes,” which result from them. I observe, therefore,

II. THAT these *new apprehensions* will be attended with *new AFFECTIONS*.

I READILY acknowledge, that the degree in which the *affections* operate, may, and will be *different*, in different persons, according to their natural constitution : but as, in some degree or another, they make an essential part of our frame, it is impossible but they must be impressed with a matter of such infinite importance, as *religion* will appear. And the *apprehensions* described above, must awaken the exercise of correspondent *affections*, and direct them to objects very *different* from those by which they were before excited, and on which they were fixed. And here now,

1. THIS may be especially illustrated in love.

LOVE is indeed the *ruling passion* of the mind, and has all the rest in an avowed and real subjection to it. And here lies the very root of human misery in our fallen and degenerate state : we are naturally *lovers of ourselves* in a very irregular degree ;

degree; *lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of GOD* (a). But, on the contrary, *the first and great commandment of the law* is written in the breast of every regenerate man: *thou shalt love the Lord thy GOD, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind* (b). It is true indeed, that if his soul were perfectly delivered into this mould, and his attainments in *Divine love* were complete, there would be an end of all sin, and almost of all calamity too: for what evil could assail or impress a mind entirely and unchangeably fixed upon GOD? Yet that the *love of GOD* should be the *prevailing affection*, is not merely a circumstance, but an essential part of true religion. While the good man *sees him who is invisible* (c), as infinitely perfect in himself, and as the author of being and happiness to the whole creation, he cannot but acknowledge, that he is, beyond comparison, the *most amiable* of all objects. And though it is certain, that nothing can so much induce and inflame our *love to GOD*, as a well-grounded assurance, that he is become *our GOD*, and *our father in Christ*; yet before the *regenerate* soul has attained to this, a sense of those favours which he receives from GOD in common with the whole human race, and more especially of those which are inseparable from a *Christian* profession, together with the apprehension of his being accessible *through a Mediator*, and reconcileable to sinful men, will diffuse some delightful sense of GOD over the mind, which will grow sweeter in proportion to the degree in which his own hopes brighten and settle, while they are growing toward the *full assurance of faith*.

(a) 2 Tim. iii. 4.

(b) Mat. xxii. 37, 38.

(c) Heb. xi. 27.

AND as the real Christian *loves him that begat, he loves him also that is begotten of him* (d). He *loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity* (e), viewing him not in a cold and insensible manner, as he once did, but with inflamed affections, *as the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely* (f). If he *knows, in any degree, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ* (g), in becoming incarnate for the salvation of his people, in making himself a sacrifice for their sins, and paying his life for the ransom of their lives; he feels himself *drawn toward Jesus, thus lifted up on the cross* (h); and *the love of Christ constrains him* (i) to such a degree, that he longs to find out some acceptable method to express his inward and overbearing sense of it. How *divided* soever true *Christians* may be in other respects, they all *agree* in this, in *loving that Jesus whom they have not seen* (k).

WE may further recollect on *this head*, that the *Apostle*, in a solemn manner, adjures Christians *by the love of the Spirit* (l), thereby plainly implying, that such a *love to him* is an important branch of their character: and it must be so in all those who regard him, as every *regenerate* soul does, as the author of divine light and life, and as the source of love and happiness, by whom this *love of GOD* is *shed abroad in the heart* (m), while it is *enlarged* with sacred delight to *run the way of his commandments* (n); as that *Spirit*, by whom we are *sealed to the day of redemption* (o), and who brings down the *foretastes of Heaven* to

(d) 1 John v. 1.

(e) 2 Cor. viii. 9.

(f) 1 Pet. i. 8.

(g) Psal. cxix. 32.

(c) Eph. vi. 24.

(h) John xii. 32.

(l) Rom. xv. 30.

(o) Eph. ix. 30.

(i) Cant. v. 10. 16.

(j) 2 Cor. v. 14.

(m) Rom. v. 5.

the heart in which *he dwells*, and which, by his presence, he consecrates as *the temple of GOD* (p).

AND most natural is it, that a soul filled with these impressions and views should overflow with unutterable joy, and feeling itself thus happy in an intercourse with its GOD, should be enlarged in *love to man*: for, says the Apostle, *ye are taught of GOD to love one another* (q). Those, whom he apprehends as *his brethren* by regenerating grace, he knows are with him *beloved of the Lord*; and as he hopes to dwell with them for ever in glory, he must *love them* so far as he knows them now. And though a narrow education, and that bigotry, which sometimes conceals itself under very honourable and pious names, may perhaps influence even a sanctified heart, so far as to entertain unkind suspicions as to those whose religious sentiments may differ from his own, and it may be, to pass some rash censures upon them; yet as his acquaintance with them increases, and he discerns, under their different forms, the traces of their common Father, his prejudices wear off, and that sometimes by very sensible degrees; and Christians *receive one another, as Christ has received them all* (r). And where the good man cannot love others with *a love of complacency and esteem*, he at least beholds them with *a love of compassion and pity*; and remembers the relation of *fellow-creatures*, where he sees no reason to hope that they are *fellow-heirs* with him. In a word, the heart is melted down into tenderness; it is warmed with generous sentiments; it longs for opportunities of diffusing good of all kinds, both temporal and spiritual, wide as its influence can reach; it beats with an ardour which sometimes painfully recoils upon

(p) 1 Cor. iii. 16.

(q) 1 Thess. iv. 9.

(r) Rom. xv. 7.

a man's



a man's self, for want of ability to help others in proportion to his desire to do it: and that God, who knows all the inmost workings of his mind, hears many an importunate *intercession for others* in the hours of solemn devotion, and many a compassionate *ejaculation*, which he is occasionally sending up to Heaven from time to time, as he passes through so sinful and so calamitous a world.

THESE are the *ruling affections* in the heart of a good man; and though it is neither reasonable nor possible, that he should entirely divest himself of *self-love*, yet he endeavours to regulate it so, that it may not interfere with the more important consideration of general good. *Self* has the lowest place in his regards, nor does he limit his affection to a *party*; but aiming at extensive usefulness, he guards against those immoderate attachments to particular friendships, and those extravagant sallies of personal fondness, which are often no more than *self-love* under a specious disguise; which at once alienate the heart from God, and contract the *social affections* within very narrow and those very irregular bounds; and so prove almost as fatal to the health of the *mind*, as an excessive flow of blood into one part would be to that of the *body*.

I HAVE enlarged so copiously on this *change* in the *leading affection* of the mind, that I must touch in a more transient manner on the rest. I add, therefore,

2. THAT a *regenerate* soul has *new aversions*.

HE once *hated knowledge*, and did not chuse the *fear of the Lord* (s). He *hated the light* (t), which disclosed to the aching eye of his conscience the beloved and indulged irregularities of his heart. He *hated* every thing that laid an embargo upon

(s) Prov. i. 29.

(t) John iii. 20.

his lusts; and was ready to count those for his *enemies* that plainly admonished him, and secretly to *dislike* those whose conduct even silently re-  
proved him. But now all these things are *amiable* to him; and those are esteemed his most valuable *friends*, whose example may be most edifying, whose instructions may be most useful, and whose admonitions may be most faithful. For he now *hates every false way* (u); yea, and every *vain thought* too (w). He looks upon every irregular desire as an *enemy*, which he longs utterly to sub-  
due; and especially strives against *that sin which does most easily beset him*, and abhors it more than he ever delighted in it. And though he rather *pities* than *hates* the persons of the most wretched and mischievous transgressors, yet he can no longer continue an endearing friendship with those who were once his seducers to sin, and his companions in it. In this sense, like *David*, he *hates the congregation of evil-doers, and will not sit with the wicked* (x); and if they will not be wrought upon by his compassionate endeavours to reclaim them, he will soon break off the infectious intercourse, and say, *Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for I determine that I will keep the commandments of my GOD* (y).

3. THE regenerate man has also *new desires*.

THERE was a time, when *sinful passions*, as the *Apostle* expresses it, *did work in his members to bring forth fruit unto death* (z). He was *fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind* (a), and *making provision to fulfil the lusts of both* (b). But now he earnestly *desires a conformity to GOD*,

(u) Psal. cxix. 104.

(w) Ver. 113.

(x) Psal. xxvi. 5.

(y) Psal. cxix. 115.

(z) Rom. vii. 5.

(a) Eph. ii. 3.

(b) Rom. xiii. 14.

as his highest happiness; and can look up to him, and say, “*Oh, Lord, the desire of my soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee* (c); “to maintain such a sense of thy presence at all times, as may influence my heart to think, my lips to speak, and my hands to act, in a manner suitable to that remembrance, and agreeable to thy wise and holy will.” He now *hungers and thirsts after righteousness* (d); feels as real an *appetite* after more advanced degrees of piety and holiness, as he ever felt toward the gratification of his senses; and *esteems* the proper methods of attaining these advanced degrees, even *more than his necessary food* (e). Instead of *desiring* to run through a long course of *animal enjoyments*, he *desires* to get above them; *longs* to be a pure and triumphant spirit in the refined regions of immortality; and *is willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord* (f).

BUT I wave the further illustration of this, till I come to consider the *new hopes* which inspire him. I therefore add, as a necessary consequence of these *new desires*,

4. THAT the *regenerate* man has *new fears*.

PAIN and sorrow, disappointment and affliction, he naturally *feared*; and the forebodings of his own mind would sometimes awaken the *fears* of future punishment, according to the righteous judgment of an offended GOD: but now he *fears* not merely punishment, but guilt; *fears* the remonstrance of an injured conscience; for he reverences *conscience* as GOD’s vicegerent in his bosom. He therefore *fears* the most *secret sins*, as well as those which might occasion public disgrace; yea,

(c) Isa. xxvi. 8.

(d) Mat. v. 6.

(e) Job xxiii. 12.

(f) 2 Cor. v. 8.

he *fears*, lest by a precipitate and inconsiderate conduct he should contract guilt before he is aware. He *fears*, lest he should inadvertently injure and grieve others, even the weakest and the meanest. He *fears* using *his liberty*, in a manner that might insnare his brethren, or might occasion any scandal to a *Christian* profession: for such is the sensibility of his heart in this respect, that he would be more deeply concerned for the dishonour brought to *GOD*, and the reproach which might be thrown on religion by any unsuitable conduct of his; than merely for that part of the shame that might immediately and directly fall upon himself. But again,

5. THE *regenerate* man has *new joys*.

THESE arise chiefly from an intercourse with *GOD* through *Jesus Christ*; and from a review of *himself*, as under the sanctifying influences of his grace, and as brought into a state of favour with him, in proportion to the degree in which he can discern himself in this character and state.

You know *David*, speaking of *GOD*, calls him *his exceeding joy* (g); and declares *the gladness he had put into his heart, by lifting up the light of his countenance upon him*, to be far beyond what *they* could have, *whose corn and wine increased* (h). And the *Apostle Paul* speaks of *Christians*, as *joying in GOD through Jesus Christ* (i), and as *rejoicing in Christ Jesus* (k): and *Peter* also describes them as those, who, *believing in him, though unseen, rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory* (l).

PERHAPS there was a time, when the good man censured all pretences of this kind, now at least in these latter days of *Christianity*, as an empty enthusiastic pretence: but since he has *tasted that the*

(g) Psal. xliii. 4.

(h) Psal. iv. 6, 7.

(i) Rom. v. 11.

(k) Phil. iii. 3.

(l) 1 Pet. i. 8.

*Lord is gracious* (m), he has that experimental knowledge of their reality and excellence, which he can confidently oppose to all the most artful and sophistical cavils; and could as soon doubt, whether the *sun* enlightens his eyes, and warms his body, as he could question, whether *GOD* has ways of manifesting himself to souls when it is felt with unutterable delight: and when thus entertained, he can adopt *David's* words, and say, that *his soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness*, so that *with joyful lips he praises GOD* (n), when *his meditation of him is thus sweet* (o), and *GOD says unto his soul, I am thy salvation* (p).

THE survey of the *Lord Jesus Christ* gives him also unutterable joy; while he reflects on that ample provision, which *GOD* has made *by him*, for the supply of all his necessities; and that firm security which is given to his soul by a believing union with *Christ*; whereby *his life* is connected with that of *his Saviour*. In his constant presence, in his faithful care, he can *boast all the day long* (q); and that friendship, which establishes a community of interests between him and his Lord, engages him to *rejoice* in that salvation and happiness, to which he is advanced *at the right hand of GOD*, and gives him, by joyful sympathy, his part with *Christ* in glory; before he personally arrives at the full possession of it.

I ADD, that he also rejoices in the consciousness of *GOD's gracious work upon his own soul*, so far as he can discern the traces of it there. He *delights* to feel himself, as it were, cured of the mortal disease with which he once saw himself infected; to find himself in health and vigour of mind, renewed

(m) 1 Pet. ii. 3.

(n) Psal. lxxiii. 5.

(o) Psal. civ. 34.

(p) Psal. xxxv. 3.

(q) Psal. xlv. 8.

to a conformity with the Divine Image. He *delights* to look inward, and see that transformation of soul which has *made the wilderness like the garden of the Lord* (r), so that *instead of the thorn there shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar the myrtle* (s). Thus *the good man is satisfied from himself* (t); and though he humbly refers the ultimate glory of all to that *GOD, by whose grace he is what he is* (u), he enters with pleasure into his own mind, and reckons it a part of gratitude to his great Benefactor, to enjoy with as high a relish as he can the present workings of Divine grace within him, as well as the pleasing prospect of what it will farther do.

BUT *this head* has so near a resemblance to some that are to follow, that were I to enlarge upon it, as I easily might, I should leave room for nothing different to be said upon them. I will only add,

6. THAT as the counter-part of this, *new sorrows* will arise in the mind of a *regenerate man*.

THESE are particularly such as spring—from the *withdrawings of GOD's presence*—from the *remainder of sin in the soul*—and from the *prevalence of it in the world about him*.

THE *regenerate man* will mourn, “when the *reviving manifestations of GOD's presence are withdrawn from his soul*.” It seems very absurd to interpret the numberless passages in the sacred writers, in which they complain of the *hidings of GOD's face from them*, as if they merely referred to the want of temporal enjoyments, or to the pressure of temporal calamities. If *the light of*

(r) Isa. li. 3.

(s) Isa. lv. 13.

(t) Prov. xiv. 14.

(u) 1 Cor. xv. 10.

*GOD's countenance*, which they so expressly oppose to temporal blessings, signify a *spiritual enjoyment*, the want of it must relate to *spiritual desertion*. And I believe there are few *Christians* in the world who are entirely unacquainted with this. They have most of them their seasons; when they *walk in darkness, and see little or no light* (w): and this, not only when anxious fears arise with relation to their own spiritual state; but at some other times, when though they can in the main call *GOD their father*, yet he seems, as it were, to *stand afar off*, and to continue them at a *distance*, which wears the face of unkindness, especially under temptations and other afflictions, in which they lose their lively sense of *GOD's* presence, and that endearing freedom of converse with him, which, through the influence of *the spirit of adoption* on their souls, they have sometimes known. If this be mysterious and unintelligible to some of you, I am heartily sorry for it: but I do not remember that I was ever intimately acquainted with any one, who seemed to me *a real Christian*, that has not, upon mentioning the case, acknowledged, that he has felt something of it: at least I will boldly venture to say this, that if you are *truly regenerate*, and do not know what I mean by it, it is because you have hitherto been kept in a continual flow of holy joy, or at least in a calm and chearful persuasion of your interest in the Divine favour: and even such may see the day, when, *strong as their mountain* seems to stand, *GOD may hide his face to their trouble* (x): or, however, they will infer from what they now feel, that it must be *a mournful case* whenever it occurs; and that *sorrow*, in such a circumstance, will soon strike on a truly sanctified heart, and wound it very deep.

(w) Isa. l. 10.

(x) Psal. xxx. 7.

THE sorrow of a good man also arises “from the remainder of sin in his soul.” Though he is upright before GOD, and proves it by keeping himself from his iniquity (y); yet he cries out, *Who can understand his errors (z)? Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin (a)?* A sense of the sinfulness of his nature humbles him in the dust; and the first risings of irregular inclinations and passions give him a tender pain, with which a carnal heart is unacquainted, even when sin is domineering within him.

AND once more, “The prevalence of sin in the world around him,” is a grief to one that is born of GOD. It pierces him to the heart to see men dishonouring GOD, and ruining themselves: he beholds transgressors, as David well expresses it, with a mixture of indignation and sorrow (b); and when he seriously considers how common, and yet how sad a case it is, he can perhaps borrow the words of the same prophet, so far as to say, that *rivers of waters run down his eyes, because men keep not the law of GOD (c).*—Now, as these are sorrows that seldom do at all affect the heart of an unregenerate man, I thought it the more proper to mention them, to assist you in your enquiries into your own state.

SUCH are the affections of love and aversion, of desire and fear, of joy and sorrow, which fill the breast of the regenerate man, and naturally arise from those new apprehensions which are described under the former head. I add,

III. THAT he has also new RESOLUTIONS.

YOU will easily apprehend I speak of those that are formed for the service of GOD, and against

(y) Psal. xviii. 23.      (z) Psal. xix. 12.      (a) Prov. xx. 9.  
 (b) Psal. cxxxix. 21.      (c) Psal. cxix. 136.



*sin.* I readily acknowledge, that there are often, in *unregenerate men*, some *resolutions* of this kind, and perhaps those very warm, and for the present very sincere; yet there is considerable *difference* between *them* and *those* we are now to represent; as the *resolutions* of the truly good man are *more universal, more immediate, and more humble.*

1. THE *resolutions* which he now forms, are *more universal* than they ever were before.

HE does not now *resolve* against *this* or *that sin*, but against *all*; against *sin*, as *sin*, as opposite to the holiness of GOD, and destructive of the honour and happiness of the rational creation. He does not say with *Naaman*, concerning *this* or *that* more convenient iniquity, *the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing* (d); nor does he resolve to excuse himself in an indulgence, even to *that sin which does most easily beset him* (e): but rather, in his general determination against sin, and in those solemn engagements with which such determinations may be attended, he fixes especially upon *those sins* which he might before have been most ready to accept.

2 THE *resolutions* of the *regenerate* man are *more immediate.*

IT very frequently happens, that while others are under awakening impressions, as they see a necessity for parting with *their sins*, and engaging in what they may call *a religious life*, they *resolve upon it*: but then they think it may be delayed a little longer; perhaps *a few years*, or at least *a few weeks or days*; or they, perhaps, refer it to some *remarkable period* which is approaching, which they flatter themselves they shall make yet *more remarkable*, as the *æra* of their reformation: but, in the mean time, they will take their *farewell* of

(d) 2 Kings v. 18. (e) Heb. xii. 1.

their lusts by a few more indulgences; and thus they delude themselves, and rivet on their chains faster than before. But the good man, with *David*, *makes haste, and delays not to keep the commandments of GOD* (f). He is like the *prodigal*; who, as soon as ever he said, *I will arise and go to my father*, immediately *arose and came to him* (g). He reckons *the time* he has already spent in the service of sin *may suffice* (h), and that indeed it is far more than enough: he wishes he could call back that which is past; but he determines, that he will not take one step further in this unhappy path. He fully *purposes*, that he will never once more deliberately and presumptuously offend GOD, in any matter, *great or small*; if any thing can be called *small*, which is a deliberate and apprehended offence: and *he determines*, that from this moment he will *yield himself to GOD, as alive from the dead*, and employ *his members as instruments of righteousness* (i). But then,

3. His *resolutions* are *more modest and humble* than they have ever been before.

AND this indeed is the great circumstance that renders them *more effectual*.—When an awakened sinner feels himself most enslaved to his vices, he pleases himself with this thought, that there is *a secret kind of spring* in his mind, which, when he pleases to exert, he can break through all at once, and commence, whenever that unhappy necessity comes upon him, a very religious man in a moment. And when conscience presses him with the memory of *past guilt*, and the representation of *future danger*, he cuts off these remonstrances with a *hasty resolve*, “I will do so no more:” but then,

(f) Psal. cxix. 60.

(g) Luke xv. 18, 20.

(h) 1 Pet. v. 3.

(i) Rom. vi. 13.

perhaps,

perhaps, the effect of this may not last *a day*; though possibly it may, at other times, continue *a few weeks or months*, where the grosser acts of sin are concerned: and indeed his *resolutions* seldom reach farther than these; for the necessity of a sanctified heart is a mystery which he has never yet learned.—But a truly *regenerate* man has learned wisdom from this experience of *his own*, and the observation of *other men's frailty*. He feels his own weakness, and is so thoroughly aware of the treachery of his own heart, that he is almost afraid to express in words *the purpose* which his very soul is forming: he is almost afraid to turn *that purpose* into a *vow* before GOD, lest the breach of *that vow* should increase his guilt: but this he can say, with repenting *Ephraim*, *Lord, turn thou me, and I shall be turned* (k); and with *David*, *Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my foot-steps may not slip* (l). “I am exceeding frail; but, Lord, *be thou surety for thy servant for good* (m), and then I shall be safe! Do thou rescue me from temptations, and I shall be delivered! Do thou fill my heart with holy sentiments, and I will breathe them out before thee! Do thou excite and maintain a zeal for thy service, and then I will exert myself in it!” And when once a man is come to such a *distrust of himself*; when, *like a little child*, he stretches out his hand to be led by his *heavenly Father*, and trusts in his guardian care alone for his security and comfort; then *out of weakness he is made strong* (n), and goes on *safe*, though perhaps *trembling*; and sees those that made the loudest boasts, and placed the greatest confidence in themselves, *falling*

(k) Jer. xxxi. 13. (l) Psal. xvii. 5. (m) Psal. cxix. 122.

(n) Heb. xi. 34.

on the right hand, and on the left, and all their bravery melting away like snow before the sun.

IV. THE regenerate man has *new LABOURS and employments.*

NOT that his former *employment* in secular life is laid aside: it would ordinarily be a very dangerous snare for a man to imagine that GOD requires this. On the contrary, the *Apostle* gives it in charge to *Christian* converts, that *in what calling soever a man is found, when he is called into the profession of the Gospel, he should therein abide with GOD* (o). But when he becomes a real *Christian* he prosecutes this *calling*, whatever it be, with a new spirit and temper, from new principles, and to new purposes. While his hands are labouring in the world, his heart is often rising to GOD: he consecrates *his work* to the Divine honour, and to the credit of religion; and desires, that *his merchandise and his gain may, in this sense, be holiness to the Lord* (p), by employing it to support the *family* which Providence has committed to his charge (q), and to relieve the *poor* which *Christ* recommends to his pity (r): and as he depends upon *GOD* to give him wisdom and success in the conduct of his affairs; he ascribes the glory of that success *to him*; not *sacrificing to his own net, nor burning incense to his own drag*. (s)

AND I will further add, that *regeneration* introduces a set of *new labours*, added to the former, with which the man was before utterly unacquainted.—We may consider, as the principal and chief of these, the *great labour* of purifying the heart, of conquering sinful inclinations and affections, and of approaching GOD by a more intimate access and

(o) 1 Cor. vii. 20, 24. (p) Isa. xxiii. 18. (q) 1 Tim. v. 8.  
(r) Acts xx. 35. (s) Hab. i. 16.

more endeared converse. Now they that imagine this to be an *easy matter*, know little of the human heart, little of the spirituality of GOD's nature and his law. Give me leave to say, that the *labours of the body*, in cultivating the earth, are much more *easily* performed than this *spiritual husbandry*. To weed a soil so luxuriant in evil productions, and to raise a plentiful harvest of holy affections and actions in a soil so barren of good; to regulate appetites and passions so exorbitant as those of the human heart naturally are, and to awaken in it suitable affections; to be abundant in the fruits of righteousness, and to converse with GOD in the exercise of devotion: these are *no little things*; nor will a little resolution, watchfulness, and activity suffice, in order to the discharge of such a business. It is comparatively *easy* to go through the *forms* of *prayer* and *praise*, whatever they are; to *read*, or from present conception to *utter*, a few words before GOD: but to *unite the heart* in GOD's service, to *wrestle with him for a blessing*, to *pour out the heart before him*, to speak to him as *searching the very heart*; so that he should say, "This is *prayer*:" this, my brethren, is a *work indeed*; and he that is conscientious in the discharge of it will find, that it is not to be dispatched in a few hasty moments, nor without serious reflection, and a resolute watch maintained over the spirit.

NEW *labours* also arise to the *regenerate* soul, in consequence of the concern it has to promote *religion* in the world.—Being possessed, as I formerly shewed you the heart of the good man is, with an *unfeigned love* to his fellow-creatures, and knowing of how great importance *religion* is to the happiness of men, he pleads earnestly with GOD for the propagation and success of the *Gospel*: and he endeavours, according to his ability and opportunity,  
to

to promote it; to promote *pure and undefiled religion* in his family and his neighbourhood, even in all around him. And this requires observation and application, that this attempt may be prudently conducted, and great resolution, in order to its being rendered effectual: it requires great diligence in *watching over ourselves*, lest our examples prove inconsistent with our precepts; and no small degree of *courage*, considering how averse the generality of mankind are to admonitions and reproofs; in consequence of which, a person can hardly act the part of a faithful *friend*, without exposing himself to the hazard of being accounted an *enemy*.

SUCH are the *new labours* of the real *Christian*: let any man try to perform them, and he will not find them *light*: but to encourage the attempt, let me further add,

V. THAT the *regenerate* soul has its *new ENTERTAINMENTS* too.

HE has *pleasures*, which a *stranger* *intermeddles not with* (t), and which *the world* can neither *give*, nor *take away* (u): pleasures, which a thousand times overbalance the most painful *labours*, and the most painful *sufferings* too; and which sweetly mingling themselves with the various circumstances of life, through which the *Christian* passes, do, as it were, *gild* all the scene, and make all the fatigues and self-denial of his life far more agreeable, than any of those *delights* the worldling, or the sensualist, can find in the midst of his unbounded and studied indulgences.—But here I shall be in great danger of repeating what I said under a *former head*, when I was speaking of the *new joys* which the *Christian* feels, in consequence of the great *change* that *regeneration* makes in his soul: and therefore,

(t) Prov. xiv. 10.

(u) John xvi. 22.

omitting what I then observed, concerning the *pleasure of communion with GOD through Christ*, and of perceiving a *work of Divine grace upon the soul*, I shall now touch upon some other sources of exalted *entertainment*, which did not so directly fall under *that head*.

1. THE Christian finds new pleasures in the *word of GOD*.

You know with what relish the *saints of old* spake of it. *Thy words were found*, says the Prophet, *and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me joy and rejoicing of mine heart* (w). *Thy statutes*, says the Psalmist, *are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; they are sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb* (x).—The apostle *Peter* beautifully represents this, when he exhorts the *saints* to whom he wrote, *as new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they might grow thereby* (y). And the *infant* that smiles on the breast, and with such eagerness and delight draws its nourishment from it, seems an amiable image of the humble *Christian* who receives the *kingdom of GOD*, and the word of that kingdom *as a little child* (z); who *lays up Scripture in his heart* (a), and draws forth the sweetness of it, with a firm persuasion, that it is indeed *the word of GOD*, and was appointed by him for the food of his soul.

2. HE also finds new pleasures in the *ordinances of Divine worship*.

HE is glad, when it is said unto him, *Let us go into the house of the Lord* (b). He indeed esteems the *tabernacles of the Lord* as amiable, and regards *a day in his courts* as better than a thousand else-

(w) Jer. xv. 16.

(x) Psal. xix. 10.

(y) 1 Pet. ii. 2.

(z) Mark x. 15.

(a) Job xxii. 22.

(b) Psal. cxxii. 1.

where

where (c). And this *pleasure* arises, not merely from any thing peculiar in the administrations of this or that man who officiates in holy things; but from the nature of the exercise in general, and from a regard to the Divine authority of those institutions which are there observed. He feels a sacred delight in an intercourse with GOD in those solemnities; in comparison of which, all the graces of composition and delivery appear as little as the harmony of *instruments*, or the perfume of *incense*, to one of the *Old Testament* saints, when compared with *the light of GOD's countenance*, which was *lifted up* on the pious Worshipper under the *Mosaic* forms, *when in his temple every one spake of his glory* (d). *One thing has he desired of the Lord, and that he seeks after, that he may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life; not to amuse his vain imagination, not to gratify his ear, not to indulge his curiosity with useless enquiries, nor merely to exercise his understanding with sublime speculations; but to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple* (e).

3. HE likewise finds a *new entertainment* in the *conversation of Christian friends*.

HE now knows what it is to have *fellowship with those whose communion is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ* (f). His *delight* is now *in them* that are truly *the excellent of the earth* (g). He delights to dismiss the usual topics of modern conversation, that some religious subject may be assumed, not as matter of dispute, but as matter of devout recollection; and loves to hear the plainest *Christian* express his experimental sense of divine things. Those sentiments of piety

(c) Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 10. (d) Psal. xxix. 9. (e) Psal. xxvii. 4.

(f) 1 John i. 3. (g) Psal. xvi. 3.



and love, which come warm from a gracious heart, are always pleasing to him; and those appear the dearest *bands of friendship*, which may draw him nearer to his heavenly Father, and unite his soul in ties of more ardent love to his Redeemer. A society of *such friends* is indeed a kind of anticipation of *Heaven*; and to chuse, and delight in such, is no contemptible token, that the soul has attained to some considerable degree of preparation for it. I only add,

VI. THAT in consequence of all this, the *regenerate* soul has *new HOPES* and *prospects*.

MEN might be very much assisted in judging of their true state, if they would seriously reflect what it is they *hope* and *wish for*? what are those *expectations* and *desires* that most strongly impress their minds? A vain mortal, untaught and unchanged by Divine grace, is always dressing up to himself some empty phantom of earthly happiness, which he looks after and pursues; and foolishly imagines, "Could I grasp it, and keep it, I should be happy." But Divine grace teaches the real *Christian* to give up these empty schemes: "GOD," does he say, "never intended *this world* for my happiness: he "will make it tolerable to me; he will give me so "much of it as he sees consistent with my highest "interest; he will enable me to derive instruction, "and it may be consolation, out of its disappoint- "ments and distresses: but he reserves my inheri- "tance for the *eternal world*. I am *begotten* "again to a *lively hope* by the resurrection of "Jesus Christ from the dead, even to the hope "of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, "and that fadeth not away (h): and though it be, "for the present, reserved in *Heaven*, it is so safe,

(h) 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

“and so great, that it is well worth my waiting for, though ever so long; *for the things that are not seen, are eternal* (i).” And this indeed is the true *character* of a good man. *Eternity* fills his thoughts; and growing sensible, in another manner than he ever was before; of the importance of it, he pants for the enjoyment of *eternal happiness*. Assign any *limited duration* to his enjoyment of GOD in the regions of glory, and you would overwhelm him with disappointment: talk of *hundreds, of thousands, of millions of years*, the disappointment is almost equal: *periods* like these seem scarce distinguishable from each other, when compared with an *eternal hope*. To *eternity* his desires and expectations are raised; and he can be contented with nothing less than *eternity*: perfect holiness, and perfect happiness *for ever and ever*, without any mixture of sin, or any alloy of sorrow; *this* he firmly expects, *this* he ardently breathes after; *a felicity* which an *immortal-soul* shall never outlive, and which an *eternal GOD* shall never cease to communicate. *This heavenly country* he seeks; he considers himself as a *citizen* of it, and endeavours to maintain *his conversation* there (k): to carry on, as it were, a daily trade for *Heaven*, and to *lay up a treasure there* (l); in which he may be *rich and great*, when all the pomp of this *earth* is passed away *as a dream*, and all its most precious metals and gems are melted down and consumed among its vilest materials in the last universal burning.

THIS is the *change*, the glorious *change* which *regeneration* makes in a man's *character* and *views*: and who shall dare to speak, or to think, *contemptibly* of it? Were we indeed to represent it as a

(i) 1 Cor. iv. 18.

(k) Phil. iii. 20.

(l) Mat. vi. 20.

kind of *charm*, depending on an *external ceremony*, which it was the peculiar prerogative of a certain order of men to perform, and yet on which *eternal life* was suspended; one might easily apprehend that it would be brought into much suspicion. Or should we place it in any *mechanical transports* of animal nature, in any *blind impulse*, in any *strong feelings*, not to be described, or accounted for, or argued upon, but known by some inward inexplicable *sensation* to be divine; we could not wonder, if calm and prudent men were slow to admit the pretension to it, and were fearful it might end in the most dangerous *enthusiasm*, made impious by excessive *appearances of piety*.—But when it is delineated by such fair and bright *characters* as those that have now been drawn; when these *Divine lineaments* on the soul, by which it bears the image of its Maker's rectitude and sanctity, are considered as its *necessary consequence*, or rather as its *very essence*; one would imagine, that every rational creature, instead of cavilling at it, should pay an immediate homage to it, and earnestly desire, and labour, and pray, to experience the *change*:—especially as it is a *change* so *desirable* for itself; as we acknowledge *health* to be, though a man were not to be *rewarded* for *being well*; nor *punished*, any farther than with the *malady* he contracts, for any negligence in this respect.

WHERE is there any thing can be more *ornamental* to our natures, than to have all the *powers of the mind* thus *changed* by grace, and our *pursuits* directed to such objects as are worthy of the best attention and regard?—to have our *apprehensions* of divine and spiritual things enlarged, and to have right conceptions of the most important matters;—to have the stream of our *affections* turned  
 5 from

from empty vanities, to objects that are proper to excite and fix them;—to have our *resolutions* set against all sin, and a full purpose formed within us of an immediate reformation and return to God, with a dependance on his grace to help us *both to will and to do*;—to have our *labours* stedfastly applied, to conquer sin, and to promote religion in ourselves and others;—to have our *entertainments* founded in a religious life, and flowing in upon us from the sweet intercourse we have with God in his word and ordinances, and the delightful conversation that we sometimes have with Christian friends;—and finally, to have our *hopes* drawn off from earthly things, and fixed upon eternity?—Where is there any thing can be more *honourable* to us, than thus to be *renewed after the image of him that created us* (m), and to *put on the new man, which after-GOD is created in righteousness and true holiness* (n)?—And where is any thing that can be more *desirable*, than thus to have the darkness of our understandings cured, and the disorders rectified, that sin had brought upon our nature? Who is there that is so insensible of his depravity, as that he would not long for such a happy *change*? Or who is there that knows how excellent a work it is, to be *transformed by the renewing of the mind* (o), that would not, with the greatest thankfulness, adore the riches of Divine grace, if it appear that he is thus become *a new creature*; that *old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new*?

BUT I shall quickly shew you, that *regeneration* is not only *ornamental, honourable, and desirable*, but *absolutely necessary*, as ever we would hope to share the blessings of God's heavenly king-

(m) Col. iii. 10.

(n) Eph. iv. 24.

(o) Rom. xii. 2.

dom, and to escape the horror of those that are finally and irrevocably excluded from it. This argument will employ several *succeeding Discourses*: but I would dismiss you at present with an earnest request, that you would, in the mean time, renew your enquiries, as to the truth of *regeneration* in your own souls; which, after all that I have been saying, it will be very inexcusable for you to neglect, as probably you will hear few *Discourses*, in the whole course of your lives, which centre more directly in this point, or are more industriously calculated to give you the safest and clearest assistance in it. May *GOD* abase the arrogance and presumption of every self-deceiving sinner; and awaken the confidence and joy of the feeblest soul, in whom this *new creation* is begun!

## SERMON IV.

The NECESSITY of REGENERATION argued, from the Immutable Constitution of GOD.

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JOHN III. 3.

*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee; except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of GOD.*

WHILE the ministers of Christ are discoursing of such a subject, as I have before me in the course of these *Lectures*, and particularly in this branch of them which I am now entering upon, we may surely, with the utmost reason, address our hearers in those words of *Moses to Israel*, in the conclusion of his dying discourse: *Set your hearts into all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe and do, even all the words of this law; for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life* (a). That must undoubtedly be *your life*, concerning which the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the incarnate wisdom of GOD, the faithful and true witness (b), has said, and said it with a solemn repeated asseveration, that without it a man cannot see the kingdom of GOD.

(a) Deut. xxxii. 46, 47.

(b) Rev. iii. 14.

THE *occasion* of his saying it deserves our notice; though the niceties of the *context* must be waved in such a series of *sermons* as this. He said it to a *Jew* of considerable rank, and, as it appears, one of the grand *Sanhedrim*, or chief council of the nation; who came not only for his own private satisfaction, but in the name of several of his brethren, to discourse with *Christ* concerning his doctrine, at the *first passover* he attended at *Jerusalem*, after he had entered on his public ministry. Our Lord would, to be sure, be peculiarly careful what *answer* he returned to such an enquiry: and this is his answer, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of GOD*: as if he should have said, “If the princes of *Israel* enquire after  
 “ my character, let them know that I came to be  
 “ a preacher of *regeneration*; and that the blessings of that *kingdom* which I am come to reveal and erect, are to be peculiar to renewed  
 “ and sanctified souls; who may, by an easy and  
 “ natural *figure*, be said *to be born again*.” And the *figure* appears very intelligible, and very instructive to those that will seriously consider it; and might lead us into a variety of pertinent and useful remarks.

You easily perceive, that *to be born again* must intimate a *very great change*; coming, as it were, into a *new world*, as an *infant* does; when after having lived a while a kind of *vegetative life* in the darkness and confinement of the womb, it is born into open day; feels the vital air rushing in on its lungs, and light forcing itself upon the awakened eyes; hears sounds before unknown; opens its mouth to receive a yet untasted food, and every day becomes acquainted with *new objects*, and exerts *new powers*, till it grows up to the maturity of a *perfect*

*fect man.* Such, and in some respects greater and nobler than this, is the *change* which *regeneration* makes in a heart, before unacquainted with religion; as you may have seen at large from *the preceding discourses*.

BUT I might further observe, that the *phrase* in the *text* may also express the *humbling nature* of this *change*, as well as the *greatness* of it. *Erasmus* gives this turn to the words; and it is so edifying, that I should have mentioned it at least, though I had not thought it so just, as it appears. *To be born again*, must signify *to become as a little child* (c); and our Lord expressly and frequently assures us, that without this *we cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven* (d). He has pronounced the very first of his *blessings* on *poverty of spirit* (e); and where this is wanting, the soul will never be intitled to the rest. A mild and humble, a docile and tractable temper, a freedom from avarice and ambition, and an indifference to those *great toys* of which men are generally so fond, are all essential parts of the *Christian character*; and they have all, in one view or another, been touched upon in the *preceding discourses*. Let it be forgiven however, if considering the importance of the case, you are told again, that *in malice ye must be children* (f); and that *if any man think himself wise, he must become a child, and even a fool, that he may be wise indeed* (g).

I MIGHT observe once more that these words intimate *the divine power*, by which this *great and humbling change* is effected. Our first formation and birth is the *work of GOD*; and no less really so in the succeeding generations of men, than the

(c) Mat. xviii. 3.

(d) Mark x. 15.

Luke xviii. 17.

(e) Mat. v. 3.

(f) 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

(g) 1 Cor. iii. 18.



first production of *Adam* was, when *GOD* formed him of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (h). We may each of us say, with respect to the *natural birth*, and in an accommodated sense with respect to the *spiritual* too, *thine eyes did see my substance, being as yet imperfect, and in thy book all my members, which in continuance of time were fashioned, were written, when as yet there was none of them* (i). All the first gracious impressions that were made upon the mind, and all the gradual advances of them, till *Christ* was formed in the heart, and the *new-creature* animated, must (as I shall hereafter shew at large) be ultimately and principally referred into a *divine operation*; and in this sense, it is *GOD* that brings every good purpose in the mind to the birth, and *GOD* that gives strength to bring forth (k).

BUT I omit the farther prosecution of these remarks at present, because they coincide with what I have said in *former discourses*, or what will occur in those which are yet to come: and shall only further consider the words; as they are a confirmation of, and therefore a proper introduction to, what I am to lay before you under the *third general head* of these discourses; in which (as I have already shewn, who may be said to be in an *unregenerate state*, and how great that *change* is which *regeneration* makes in the soul) I shall now proceed,

THIRDLY, To shew the high *importance*, yea, the absolute *necessity* of this *change*.

OUR *Lord* expresses it in a very lively and awakening manner, in these few determinate words, which are here before us: *Verily, verily, I say*

(h) Gen. ii. 7.

(i) Psal. cxxxix. 16.

(k) Isa. lxvi. 9.

unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of GOD. You see how emphatical the words are: he who is himself invariable truth, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever* (1), repeats it again and again, with as much solemnity as he ever uses upon any occasion; repeats it to us, as he did to Nicodemus, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, that is, I seriously deliver it as a truth of infinite moment; except a man, i. e. any man, whatever his profession, whatever his knowledge, or whatever his privileges may be; though he be a Jew, though he be a Pharisee, though he be, as thou Nicodemus art, a ruler or a senator; except he be born again, and have that great change, so often described in the word of GOD, wrought by the operation of the spirit in his mind, he cannot see the kingdom of GOD: he cannot by any means approach it, so as to enter into it, or have any share in the important blessings which it contains.*”

THAT we may more fully understand, and enter into this weighty argument, I shall from these words,

I. BRIEFLY consider, what it is to *see the kingdom of GOD.*

II. SHEW how *absolutely impossible* it is, that any *unregenerate* man should *see it.* And,

III. How *wretched* a thing it is to be *deprived of the sight, and enjoyment of it.*

AND I am well persuaded, that if you diligently attend to these things, you will be inwardly and powerfully convinced, that no argument could be more proper to demonstrate the *importance and necessity of Regeneration,* than this, which our

(1) Heb. xiii. 8.

*Lord* has suggested in these awful, emphatical, and comprehensive words.

I. I AM to shew you what it is to see *the kingdom of GOD*.

AND for the explication of it, it will be necessary to consider—what we are to understand by *this kingdom*; — and what is meant by *seeing it*.

[1.] I would shew you what we are to understand by *the kingdom of GOD*.

AND you will pardon me if I state the matter pretty largely; because the *phrase* is used in *scripture* in *different senses*; and the true interpretation of many passages in it depends on a proper distinction between them. You may observe then for the explication of *this phrase*,—that *the kingdom of GOD* in general signifies “the *society* of “those who profess themselves the servants and “subjects of *Christ*;” and in consequence of this, —that there are some passages, in which it peculiarly relates to “the *imperfect dispensation* of “*this kingdom*, and the beginning of it in the “world;”——and others, in which it relates to “the more *perfect form*, which this *society* is to “bear in the world of glory.”

1. THE *kingdom of GOD*, or the *kingdom of heaven* (for they are *synonymous phrases*,) does in the general signify “the *society* of “those who profess themselves the servants “and subjects of *Christ*.”

You well know *this* was a *phrase* used among the *Jews*; and therefore the *original* of it is to be traced from the *Old Testament*: and I apprehend it to be this. Almost every *Christian* is aware, that in the early days of the *Jewish* commonwealth, as *Samuel* with great propriety expresses it, *GOD*

was their king (m). *Jehovah* was not only the great object of their religious regard, as the creator and supporter of the whole world; but he was also their *supreme civil magistrate*, settling the forms of their political government, and reserving to himself some of the chief acts of royal authority. They did indeed afterwards *desire another king, like the other nations* round about them (n). But still *those kings* being appointed by *GOD*, were indeed to be looked upon as no other than *his vicegerents*, though another kind of governors than he had originally instituted. By degrees their peculiar regard to the civil authority of *GOD* among them, as well as to his religious authority which was nearly connected with it, in a great measure wore out; and their *government* went through a great many *different forms*, which it would be unnecessary here particularly to describe. Nevertheless *GOD* was pleased to declare by *king David*, and by many others of his holy *prophets*, that he would in due time interpose to erect another, and a far more extensive *kingdom* in the world: not indeed upon the same political principles, with that which he exercised over the *Jews*; which principles would by no means have suited this extensive design: but it should be a *kingdom* in which the authority of the *GOD of heaven* should be acknowledged, and his laws of universal righteousness observed with greater care, and to nobler purposes, as well as by a vastly greater number of subjects than ever before. *This kingdom* he determined to commit to the government of the *Messiah*, who with regard to this was called *the Lord's anointed, his king whom he set upon his holy hill of Zion* (o); and to whom indeed he would give all power, not only on earth, but in

(m) 1 Sam. xii. 12.

(n) 1 Sam. viii. 5.

(o) Psal. ii. 2. 6.

heaven

heaven too (p); so that having trained up his subjects here, in the discipline of holiness and obedience, he should at length translate them to another and a better country, that is, a heavenly, where they should see his glory, and should reign with him in eternal life.

THIS plainly appears from the whole tenor of the *Old and New Testament*, to have been the grand plan of GOD, with respect to the *Messiah's kingdom*: and you will easily see, that coming from GOD as its great author, and referring to him as its end, it may, with great propriety be called the *kingdom of GOD*; and ultimately terminating in the heavenly state, it may also properly be called the *kingdom of Heaven*. These were phrases which prevailed in the *Jewish* nation, before *Christ*, or his immediate *fore-runner* appeared: and indeed they were used by *Daniel* in a very remarkable manner, which probably made them so familiar to the *Jews*, who had some peculiar reasons for studying his writings, even more than those of some other prophets. After that prophet had foretold the rise and fall of several great empires of the world, he adds, *and in the days of these last kings* (i. e. of the *Romans*) *shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall not be destroyed,—but shall stand for ever* (q). And the person whom the *ancient of days*, i. e. the eternal and ever-blessed GOD should fix on the throne of *this kingdom*, from his appearing in the human nature, is called *the son of man* (r); *I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the son of man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and*

(p) Matt. xxviii. 18.

(q) Dan. ii. 44.

(r) Dan. vii. 13, 14.

a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

IN allusion to this, when our Lord Jesus Christ appeared, he called himself *the son of man*: and he particularly used *this phrase*, and it was exceedingly proper that he should, in this conference with *Nicodemus*, again and again (s). And all those who being convinced of the divine commission he bore, submitted themselves to him, might in this respect be said, *to enter into the kingdom of GOD, or of heaven*; that is, into the *society* which had so long been foretold and expected under that title. *This kingdom*, as the above mentioned *prophecy* declared, was to be raised from very *low beginnings*, and under the personal ministry of *Christ* and his *Apostles*, till at last it should extend through very distant regions of the world, and *kings* and *princes* should submit themselves to it, and reckon it their glory to enrol themselves among his subjects.

AGREEABLE to this meaning of the *phrase*, and to this view with respect to the establishment of *his kingdom*, our Lord opened his ministry with preaching, as *John the Baptist* had done, *the kingdom of Heaven* (t). And you will see, that in most places of the Gospel, where the *phrase* occurs, it is to be taken in this sense. Thus our Lord says, *Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven* (u); i. e. they are fit to be members of *this society*, and to receive the blessings of it. *Seek first the kingdom of GOD, and his righteousness* (w); i. e. labour to serve the in-

(s) John iii. 13, 14.

(t) Mat. iii. 2. iv. 17.

(u) Mat. v. 3.

(w) Mat. vi. 33.

terest of this *society* that I am erecting, and to obtain and promote *that righteousness* which it recommends, and is intended to establish in the world. And again, *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of GOD* (x): persons with such a disposition are most fit to become *my subjects*, and to enter into this holy and spiritual *society*. And when *our Lord* says to the *Pharisees, Publicans, and harlots, go into the kingdom of GOD before you* (y); he means, no doubt, they are more ready than you to join themselves to the *society* of those who profess themselves *my subjects*. And once more, when he speaks of some who chose the severities of a *single life*, that with less entanglements they might serve the interests of *his church*, he expresses it, by their *making themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of Heaven's sake* (z).

I SHALL only add, that the *phrase*, by a near connection with this sense, sometimes signifies *the charter of this society*, or the *privileges* which it affords to its members; as when *our Lord* says, *Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of GOD as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein* (a).

THIS then is the general sense of *this phrase*: it signifies “the *society* of those who should submit themselves to the *government* of *Christ*, as appointed by *GOD* to rule over them; who are thereby to be considered as *GOD's people* and *subjects*.” In consequence of this you will easily apprehend;

2. THAT it comprehends “the more *imperfect dispensation*, under which the members of

(x) Luke xviii. 16.

(y) Mark xxi. 31.

(z) Mat. xix. 12.

(a) Luke xviii. 17.

“ *this society* are, during their abode in the  
“ present world.”

ALL that passes here is indeed but the *opening* of *Christ's kingdom*: nevertheless, the *phrase* does sometimes more particularly refer to *this opening*; and there are several passages, in which it would be apparently absurd to suppose it comprehended the *glories* of the *invisible state*, to which *Christ* intended finally to conduct his faithful servants. Thus *our Lord* tells the *Pharisees*, *The kingdom of GOD is come unto you* (b), i. e. that gracious *dispensation* under the *Messiah*, by which *God* is gathering subjects to his *Son*. And elsewhere he says to them, *The kingdom of GOD cometh not with observation*; i. e. not with such outward shew and grandeur as you expect; but *behold, it is within*, or, (as it might be rendered) *among you* (c): *GOD* has begun to open and establish it, though you know it not; and has actually brought many poor sinners into it, whom you proudly deride as ignorant and accursed. Thus also, when *our Lord* says to *Peter*, *I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven* (d), it would be most absurd to suppose, he meant to grant to him the power of admitting into, or excluding from, *the world of glory*: but the plain meaning is, that he should bear a distinguished office in the *church* upon earth, and be the means of admitting *Jews* and *Gentiles* into it. Here, as in many other instances, *the kingdom of GOD*, or *of Heaven*, means much the same with the *professing church of Christ*, during its settlement in this *imperfect state*: as it undoubtedly does, when *Christ* threatens his hearers, that *the kingdom of GOD should be taken away from*

(b) Mat. xii. 28.

(c) Luke xvii. 20, 21.

(d) Mat. xvi. 19.

them



*them* (e) : and when he represents it, as consisting of *good* and *bad* (f); of *tares* and *wheat* (g); but declares, that at the last day he *will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity* (h) ; whereas nothing of that kind shall ever enter into *the kingdom of glory*. But yet,

3. It ultimately relates to “the more perfect form and state of *this society* in the *kingdom of glory*.”

You very well know, that the design of GOD in his Gospel was not to establish a *temporal kingdom*, as the *Jews* expected; nor merely to form a *body of men*, who should live upon earth with some peculiar forms of worship, under very excellent rules, and with distinguished privileges of a spiritual nature; but that all these ultimately referred to the *invisible world*. Thither *the son of man* was removed, when he had finished the scenes of his labour and sufferings upon *earth*; and thither all the true and faithful *members of the kingdom* were sooner or later to be brought, and there were to have their final settlement and everlasting abode, in a far more splendid and happy state, than the greatest monarch on earth has ever known: they shall *there*, as the *Apostle* most properly expresses it, *reign in life by Jesus Christ* (i). Now as *the kingdom of GOD upon earth* is to be considered with a leading view to *this*; so we sometimes find, that *this glorious state* of its members, or (which will come much to the same thing) *the society* of the faithful in this glorious state, is, by way of eminence, called *the kingdom of GOD*: and with regard to *this*, they whose characters are such that they shall be *excluded* from thence, are represented

(e) Mat. xxi. 43.

(f) Mat. xiii. 48.

(g) Ver. 25.

(h) Ver. 41.

(i) Rom. v. 17.

as having *no part* in the *kingdom of Heaven*, though they have been *by profession* members of the *church of Christ* on earth. Of this you have a remarkable instance, where *our Lord* says, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven* (k): now it was *calling Christ Lord*, or professing a regard to him as a divine teacher and governor, which was the very circumstance that distinguished the members of *his kingdom on earth* from the rest of mankind: yet as they who do this insincerely shall be *excluded from final glory*, it is said, *they shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven*.—So also the *Apostle* tells us, that *flesh and blood*, i. e. such gross machines of animal nature as those in which we now dwell, *cannot inherit the kingdom of GOD* (l); they cannot dwell in so pure a region; and therefore it is necessary, that before they enter upon it, those who are found *alive* at the illustrious day of *Christ's appearance*, should undergo a miraculous *change* to fit them for such an abode.—In reference to this we are likewise told, that *then*, i. e. at the great resurrection-day, *the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father* (m).—And this is what *our Lord* most certainly had in view, when he tells the impenitent *Jews*, that *there should be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when they should see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of GOD, and they themselves thrust out* (n): which could not be meant of the privileges of the *Christian church upon earth*, in which the *patriarchs* had no share; nor did the *Jews* at

(k) Mat. vii. 21.

(l) 1 Cor. xv. 50.

(m) Mat. xiii. 43.

(n) Luke xiii. 28.

all envy those professing *Christians*, who most evidently had: it must undoubtedly therefore be numbered among those passages, in which *the kingdom of Heaven* chiefly refers to *the state of glory*. And I apprehend, the *text* here before us may be added to that catalogue; which leads us to shew;

[2.] WHAT we are to understand by *seeing the kingdom of GOD*.

Now, in general, you will easily apprehend, that to *see the kingdom* is to *enjoy the blessings of it*. — There is no need of enumerating many passages of Scripture, where *to see* properly signifies *to enjoy*. — This is apparently the sense of it, when *Christ* declares, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see GOD* (o): for the *Deity* cannot be the *object of sight*; but the promise is, that such souls, (oh that we may be in their number!) shall for ever *enjoy* the most delightful communications from him. And thus again we are to understand it; where it is said, *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see, i. e. that he may enjoy good* (p)? For otherwise, *to see it* without *enjoying* it, would be a great aggravation of misery and distress. And in this sense it is most evident, that *seeing the kingdom of GOD* must here be put, for *enjoying* the chief and most important *blessings* appropriated to this happy state; because, as I have just been observing, *condemned sinners* are represented in another sense, as *seeing that kingdom* and the glorified saints in it; but viewing it only at an unapproachable distance, as a spectacle that fills them with horror and despair.

THIS therefore is, upon the whole, the meaning of this passage: “That no *unregenerate* soul

(o) Mat. v. 8.

(p) Psal. xxxiv. 12.

“ shall

“ shall finally have *any part* in the *glory* and  
 “ *happiness*, which *Christ* has prepared for his faith-  
 “ ful subjects; nor can any that appear to be such,  
 “ according to the tenor and constitution of the  
 “ gospel, be admitted into the number even of  
 “ *professing Christians.*” It is true indeed, a  
 man may appear under such a *disguise*, that those  
 who are in this sense *the stewards of the myste-*  
*ries of GOD* (q), may in the judgment of charity,  
 be obliged to think well of him, and to admit him:  
 but *Christ* who intimately knows him, does even  
 now discern him. The present external privileges  
 he enjoys, are such as he has no just right to; and  
 in a little time, *Christ* will *root him out of this*  
*kingdom* with a vengeance, and he shall be openly  
 declared *a rebel*, and one whom the *Lord* of it  
*never knew*, or never approved (r). So that upon  
 the whole, it is so little a part that he had in the  
*kingdom*, and that for so short a time; that it may,  
 in the free language of Scripture, be said, that he  
 has *never seen the kingdom of GOD* at all; that  
 he has *neither part nor lot in this matter* (s), has  
*no part with GOD's chosen, nor any lot with his*  
 inheritance.

HAVING thus largely explained the meaning of  
*this phrase*, I now proceed,

II. To shew you how *certain* this declaration of  
*our Lord* in the *text* is, or how *absolutely*  
*impossible* it is, that *any unregenerate* man  
 should thus *see the kingdom of GOD*.

Now this I shall argue,—partly “ from the  
 “ *immutable constitution of GOD*, whose *king-*  
 “ *dom* it is;”—and partly “ from the *nature of*  
 “ *its blessings*, which are such, that no *unrege-*

(q) 1 Cor. iv. 1.

(r) Mat. vii. 23.

(s) Acts viii. 21.

“ *nerate*

“*regenerate* man, while he continues in that state, can have any fitness or capacity to *enjoy them*.”

THE *first* of these considerations is copious and important enough, to furnish out abundant matter for the remainder of *this discourse*; and it will be difficult to dispatch it within these limits.

[1.] THE *impossibility* there is, that any *unregenerate* man should *enter into the kingdom of GOD*, appears, “from the *immutable constitution* of that *GOD*, whose *kingdom* it is.”

THIS might be sufficiently argued, from the express and emphatical *words* of our *Lord Jesus Christ* in the *text*. For he bore his *father's commission* to preach the *gospel of the kingdom*, to publish the *good news* of its erection and success, and likewise to declare *its nature* and the *method of admittance* into it. And he is himself the great *Sovereign* of that *kingdom*; and consequently cannot but perfectly, and beyond all comparison with any other, know the whole of *its constitution*.—But GOD has repeated the declaration *by him*, and *by his other messengers* to the children of men, in different ages, and under different dispensations, in such a manner as suited its infinite importance.—And, therefore, for the farther illustration of the argument, I shall enumerate a great variety of *scriptures* that speak the same language; not so much aiming therein at the speculative proof of the point, as attempting to impress the consciences of my hearers with a sense of its certainty; and humbly hoping that some of those *sharp-pointed arrows*, which I am now drawing out of the *quiver of GOD*, may, by the direction of his spirit, *enter the reins* of some against whom they are levelled-(t), and con-

(t) Lam. iii. 13.

vince them of the *absolute necessity* of an entire *change* in their *hearts*, as well as their *lives*, or of the vanity of all those *hopes* which they entertain, while that *change* is wanting. And let me bespeak your attention; not to the conjectures or reasonings of a frail mortal man, but to the solemn admonitions and declarations of the eternal *GOD*; and be assured that in one sense or another, *his word shall take hold on you*, as it has done on sinners of former generations, either for conviction, or condemnation.

THAT I may not be confounded in the multiplicity of my *proofs*, I shall range them under these *three distinct heads*.—The *prophets* of the *Old Testament* were commissioned to make *this declaration*:—it was renewed by the preaching of *Christ*;—and was supported by the testimony of the *Apostles* under the inspiration of the *Holy Spirit*.

1. THE *prophets* of the *Old Testament* were commissioned in effect to make *this declaration*, that no *unregenerate* sinners should enter into the kingdom of *GOD*.

WELL might our Lord say to *Nicodemus*, art thou a teacher in *Israel*, and knowest not these things (u)? For to this in effect all the *prophets* bear witness, and it might be learned from almost every page of their writings. It is true the particular *phrase* of being *born again*, or *regenerated*, does not occur there; nor is it expressly said, that an *unregenerate* man shall not be admitted into *GOD's kingdom*. But then the *prophets* every where assert, what is in effect the same, that no *wicked man*, who does not heartily repent of his sins, and turn from them to *GOD*, must expect the *Divine favour*. Now if you con-

(u) Ver. 10.

sider what we mean by an *unregenerate man*, according to the description I have given before, you will find it is just the same as an *impenitent sinner*: and if it be declared that such are not to expect the Divine favour, nay, that they must certainly prove the objects of his displeasure, this must certainly imply an *exclusion from his kingdom*, and must intend a great deal more than being *deprived of everlasting happiness*. And thus you see that *all those Scriptures*, which speak of the irreconcilable *hatred of GOD* against *sin*, and against all *impenitent sinners*, come in to do service here, and are equivalent to the declaration in the *text*. And I may hereafter shew you, that there are *many Scriptures* in the *Old Testament* which lead men to consider *that change*, said to be so *necessary*, as what must be effected by a *Divine operation* on their souls. But as that will more properly come in under a *following head*, I shall at present content myself with selecting *a few Scriptures*, as a specimen of many hundreds more, in proof of the main point before us; and I beseech you that you would endeavour to enter, not only into the *sense*, but into the *spirit* of them.

You well know that *unregenerate sinners* are *wicked men*; and of such it is said, *GOD is angry with the wicked every day* (w); or *all the day long*; as the *original* imports. The sinner lies down and rises up, goes out and comes in, under the Divine displeasure; and though with great patience GOD bears with him for a while, he is described as preparing his dreadful artillery against him, to smite him even with a mortal wound: so far will he be from *admitting him into his kingdom*, that, as it is there added, *if he turn not he*

(w) Psal. vii. 11.

*will whet his sword; he has bent his bow and made it ready; he has also prepared for him the instruments of death (x).* And in another place, he describes the dreadful consequence of that preparation in most lively terms: *If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me: I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh from the beginning of revenges on the enemy; i. e. as soon as I begin this awful work (y).* And elsewhere he compares *the destruction* which he will bring upon sinners at last, to that which he executed on *Sodom and Gomorrah*, when he scattered fire and brimstone on their habitations, and reduced their pleasant country to a burning lake: *Upon the wicked he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this will be the portion of their cup (z);* and oh, how unlike the state and abode of those who are the happy subjects of *his kingdom!*

NONE of the prophets speak in milder and more gentle language to returning penitents than *Isaiah*; yet he declares, *there is no peace, saith my GOD, to the wicked (a).* Yea, he does as it were, call in the concurrence of all who feared GOD, and who loved their country, to echo back and enforce the admonition: *say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him; but on the other hand, wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him (b).*

THE enumeration would be endless; and it would require more than the time of a whole discourse, only to read over without any comment

(x) Ver. 12, 13.  
(a) Isa. lvii. 21.

(y) Deut. xxxii. 41, 42.  
(b) Isa. iii. 10, 11.

(z) Psal. xi. 6.



or remark, one half of the *passages* which might properly be introduced on this occasion. I will therefore only mention *two* more, which though some of you may *hear* with indifference, I confess I cannot *read* without a very sensible inward commotion.

THE *one* is that passage in the *Mosaic law*, where GOD directs his servants to say, *If there be among you a root that beareth gall and worm-wood, or any unregenerate soul, who when he hears the words of this curse, shall bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst, and run into one debauchery and sin after another: The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke and be inflamed against that man;— and the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant, that are written in the book of the law* (c). There is a terrible *emphasis* of which we cannot but take notice here: GOD declares, that if among all the thousands of Israel, there was but one such presumptuous sinner, that thus *flattered himself in the way of his own heart*, he would make a terrible example of him, and *separate that one man to evil*, out of thousands and ten thousands of his faithful and obedient servants.

THIS therefore is a passage full of apparent *terror*: the *other* is indeed a language of *mercy*; but it contains a most *awful insinuation*, which appears, as good *Archbishop Tillotson* expresses it, “like a razor set in oil, which wounds with so much the keener edge.” *As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the*

(c) Deut. xxix. 18—21.

wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel (d)? thereby plainly intimating, that notwithstanding all that gentleness of the Divine nature, which he expresses in a most tender invitation, which he confirms even with the solemnity of an oath; yet, if sinners did not turn from their evil ways, there was no remedy, but they must die for it.

AND how, Sirs, will any of you that continue in an *unregenerate state*, arm yourselves against these terrors? Is it by saying, “that these are the thunders of Mount Sinai; that these are denunciations of the Old Testament; whereas the new speaks in milder language?” You may easily know the contrary; and to this purpose I am further to shew you,

2. THAT this declaration was renewed by the preaching of Christ.

IT is true indeed, that *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ* (e): yet all the grace and gentleness of that administration he brought did not contradict those awful *threatnings*; nay, it obliged him to set them in a stronger light.—He presently repeats to *Nicodemus* what he had just before asserted in the text, and declares, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of GOD* (f); i. e. “As he must be *baptized with water*, in order to a regular entrance into the society of my people, so he must also be *sanctified and transformed* by the cleansing and renewing influences of the *spirit*, signified by the *water* there used, or he can have no part in the *blessings* which my *gospel* brings.”—And that this must produce an

(d) Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

(e) John i. 17.

(f) John iii. 5.

*universal-change* in the *life* as well as the *heart*, and a faithful *subjection* to the *will of GOD*, without which no *profession* will stand a man in any stead, *our Lord* solemnly declares in the conclusion of his incomparable *discourse* on the Mount: *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father who is in Heaven: many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity* (g). And shall you, Sirs, merely for having a name and place in his house, escape; when those that have preached his gospel, and wrought miracles in confirmation of it, when those that personally conversed with Christ, and those that ministered unto him shall perish, if destitute of a holy temper of heart, and of its solid fruit in their lives?—Has not *our Lord* expressly said, that *he will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity; and will cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth* (h)?—Nay, in his infinite compassion he has given to sinners, as it were, a copy of the sentence that will another day be pronounced upon them; that they may meditate upon it, and review it, and judge whether they can bear the terror of its execution: hear it attentively, and then say whether *unregenerate* sinners shall enter into his kingdom. The dreadful doom is this; *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels* (i). And what now will you say to this? Can any soul

(g) Mat. xii. 21, 22, 23. (h) Mat. xiii. 41, 42. (i) Mat. xxv. 41.

of you imagine, that the *Lord Jesus Christ* did not know what would pass in this day in which he is appointed to preside? or that *knowing it*, and knowing it would be something *different from this*, he would, on any consideration whatsoever, make a false representation, and lay so much stress upon it? Yet *one or other* of these things you must secretly imagine; or must own, that every *unregenerate* sinner, and you among the rest, must not only be *excluded* from his presence, but be *condemned* to suffer all the fury of his wrath, in company with *devils* and *dann'd spirits*, in final darkness and everlasting burnings. It only remains that I shew you,

3. THAT the *same testimony* was renewed by the *Apostles*, under the influence of the *Holy Spirit*.

You know that they were authorized by their Great Master to declare, in an authentic manner, the *constitution* of his *kingdom*; and that *he who despises them, despises Christ* (k). Now I would fain persuade you all, to consider this argument as it lies in *Scripture*; to read over the *epistolary parts* of the *New Testament* in this view, to observe what encouragement they any of them give to an *unregenerate* sinner, to expect any part of the *kingdom of Heaven*. In the mean time, permit me to present you with a *few texts*, as a *specimen* of the rest.

THE apostle *Paul*, in his *epistle* to the *Romans*, does indeed speak of God's *justifying the ungodly* (l); but lest any should vainly imagine that he encourages the *hope* of those that continue so, he expressly tells us, in the very same *epistle*, that *the wrath of GOD is revealed from Heaven*

(k) Luke x. 16.      (l) Rom. iv. 5.

against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (m); and that ere long *this wrath*, shall be executed, even in *the day of the more ample revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD*; who will render to every man according to his deeds:—To them that do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, (which is the character of every unregenerate sinner) indignation and wrath; tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, as having had the most signal advantages, though advantages inferior to yours, and also of the Gentile (n). And farther he assures us, that *to be carnally minded is death*; and that *the carnal mind*, which universally prevails in men, till by regenerating grace they are made spiritual, is *enmity against GOD*, and is not subject to the law of GOD, neither indeed can be (o).—In another epistle he mentions it as a first principle, in which, it might rationally be supposed, no Christian was uninstructed; *Know ye not*, says he, *that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of GOD* (p)? And elsewhere he declares, that all external modes of religion, separate from that *entire change* of soul which I have described, are worthless and vain: *In Christ Jesus*, says he, or to those that desire any part in him and his kingdom, *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature* (q).—He likewise tells us to this purpose in another place, that his *grace, which has appeared unto all men, teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world* (r); and yet, after all, to acknowledge, that it is not by works of righteousness, which we have

m) Rom. i. 18. (n) Rom. ii. 5, 6, 8, 9. (o) Rom. viii. 6, 7. (p) 1 Cor. vi. 9. (q) Gal. vi. 15. (r) Tit. ii. 11, 12.

done,

done, but according to his mercy he saves us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he has shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour (s).—And without holiness, which is the effect of these sacred operations upon the soul, he expressly tells us in another place, that *no man shall see the Lord* (t).—And to alledge but one more passage from him; as it is evident, that all *unregenerate* sinners, and only they, are ignorant of GOD, and disobedient to the Gospel; he solemnly assures us, that instead of receiving such at last into this kingdom, *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not GOD, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power* (u).—This is the testimony of the apostle *Paul* in his own emphatical words, zealous as he was for the doctrine of *free grace*, which such declarations as these do not in the least degree contradict.

LET us now hear *his brethren*, the other apostles of the Lord.—*James* urges sinners, if they ever desire to *draw nigh to GOD*, and to have him *draw nigh to them*, to *cleanse their hands, and purify their hearts* (w). And yet more expressly he says, when he speaks of those who should *receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him; of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures* (x).—The apostle *Peter* describes *Christians*, as those whose

(s) Tit. iii. 5, 6. (t) Heb. xii: 14. (u) 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9.  
(w) Jam. iv. 8. (x) Jam. i. 12, 18.

souls were purified in obeying the truth through the Spirit, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible (y); and as those, who were made partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (z)?—Again, John the beloved disciple tells us, that every one that doth righteousness is born of GOD (a); but he that committeth sin is of the Devil (b): and that every one that has a well-grounded hope of being like Christ, and seeing him as he is, when he appears, purifies himself, even as he is pure (c).—And once more, the apostle Jude, as he describes those who are sensual, and have not the spirit, as men, that, if they were saved at all, must be plucked out of the fire (d); so he echoes back that awful prophecy, which Enoch had so long since delivered, that the Lord will come with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all that are ungodly, of all those ungodly deeds and words, by which they have violated his law (e).

THIS then appears, from the whole tenor of the Scriptures, to be the positive and immutable constitution of the great GOD, “that none who are unregenerate shall be admitted to enjoy the happiness of Heaven.” And from the view that we have taken of the sacred writings it is manifest, that this, in every age, has been the language of the word of GOD; and under every dispensation we have sufficient evidence of this important truth. This is the doctrine of the *Old Testament*; and many are the passages that I have offered from the *law of Moses*, and from the *Prophets*, and the *Psalms*, that shew it is impossible an unrenewed

(y) 1 Pet. i. 22, 23.      (z) 2 Pet. i. 4.      (a) 1 John ii. 29.  
 (b) 1 John iii. 8.      (c) 1 John iii. 2, 3.      (d) Jude ver. 19, 23.  
 (e) Jude ver. 14, 15.

soul should *enter into Heaven*. And the same also is asserted in the strongest terms in the *New Testament*; and when *Christ* came to set *the Gospel of the kingdom* in a clearer light, the purport of the declaration that he makes to *Nicodemus* in the *text*, was frequently repeated by him in the course of his preaching, and represented as the rule he would regard at the last day. And the inspired *Apostles* speak the same thing with an united voice, and testify at large in their *epistles*, that it is absolutely *necessary* we should *be born again*, if ever we would *hope to see the kingdom of GOD*.

So that now, Sirs, I may say, *Call, if there be any that will answer; and to which of the saints will you turn* (f), to encourage your vain and presumptuous *hope*, of finding your lot among *GOD's* people in the *kingdom of glory*, if you are strangers to that important and universal *change*, which we before described as *regeneration* in the *Scripture sense* of the word? The *Prophets* under the *Old Testament*, and *Christ* and his *Apostles* under the *New*, concur, in all the variety of the most awful language, to expose so presumptuous a *hope*. And is it not audacious *madness* in any, to venture their souls upon it? Thus you would undoubtedly judge of any man, who should strike a dagger into his breast, or discharge a pistol at his head, on this presumption, that the almighty power of *GOD* could prevent his death, though the heart or the brain were pierced. But it is much greater *folly* for a man, while he continues in an *unregenerate state*, to promise himself a part in the *kingdom of Heaven*. For though there would be no reason in the world to expect a *miraculous interposition*, to save a life which a man was so resolutely bent to destroy; yet

(f) Job v. 27



none can say, that such an *interposition* would contradict any of the express engagements of *GOD's word*; whereas to admit an *unregenerate* sinner into the regions of *glory*, would be violating, not *this* or *that* single declaration, but the whole series and tenor of it: and we shall farther shew, in the *next Discourse*, that it would also be, in effect, altering the very *nature* of the *heavenly kingdom* itself, as well as its *constitution*. Now what *hope* can be more *desperate*, than that which can have no support, but in the *subversion* of the *Redeemer's kingdom*, and even of the *eternal throne of GOD*, the foundations of which are *righteousness* and *truth*!

## SERMON V.

Of the INCAPACITY of an UNREGENERATE Person for relishing the Enjoyments of the Heavenly World.

JOHN III. 3.

— *Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of GOD.*

**I**N order to demonstrate the *necessity* of *regeneration*, of which I would fain convince not only your understandings, but your consciences, I am now proving to you that *without it*, it is *impossible to enter into the kingdom of GOD*: and how *weighty a consideration* that is I am afterwards to represent.

THAT it is thus *impossible*, the words in the *text* do indeed sufficiently prove: but for the further illustration of the subject, I have proposed to consider it under *two distinct views*.

I HAVE already shewn it is *impossible*, because  
 “ the *constitution* of the *kingdom of heaven* is such,  
 “ that GOD has solemnly declared, and this un-  
 “ der *different dispensations*, and more or less  
 “ plainly in *all ages* of his church, that no *un-*  
 “ *regenerate* person, *i. e.* no impenitent sinner,  
 “ shall have any part in it.” And I am now  
 further to shew,

[2.] THAT “the *nature* of the *future-happiness* (which is here chiefly signified by *the kingdom of GOD*), is such, that an *unregenerate* person would be *incapable of relishing it*, even upon a supposition of his being admitted into it.”

THIS is a thought of so great importance, and so seldom represented in its full strength, that I shall at present confine my discourse entirely to it.

I KNOW, sinners, it will be one of the most difficult things in the world, to bring you to a serious persuasion of this truth. You think *Heaven* is so lovely, and so glorious a place, that if you could possibly get an admittance thither, you should certainly be *happy*. But I would now set myself, if possible, to convince you that this is a rash and ill-grounded persuasion; and that on the contrary, if you were now in the regions of glory, and in the society of those blessed inhabitants, *that unrenewed nature* and *unsanctified heart* of yours, would give you a *disrelish* for all the sublimest entertainments of that blissful place, and turn *Heaven* itself into a kind of *Hell* to you.

Now for the demonstration of this, it is only necessary for you seriously to consider “what a kind of *happiness* that of *Heaven* is, as it is represented to us *in the word of GOD* ;” for from thence undoubtedly we are to take our notions of it.

You might to be sure sit down and imagine a *happiness* to yourselves, which would perfectly suit your degenerate taste; a *happiness* which the more entirely you were enslaved to flesh and sense, the more exquisitely you would be able to enter into it. If *GOD* would assign you a region in that beautiful world, where you should dwell in fine houses magnificently furnished, and gaily adorned; where the most harmonious music should sooth your ear, and

delicious food and generous wines in a rich variety should regale your taste: if he should give you a splendid retinue of people, to caress and attend you, offering you their humblest services, and acknowledging the most servile dependance upon your favour: especially if with all this he should furnish you with a set of companions just of your own temper and disposition, with whom you might spend what proportion of time you pleased, in gaming and jollity, in riot and debauchery, without any interruption from the reproof, or even the example of the children of God, or from indispositions of body, or remorse of conscience: *this* you would be ready to call *life* and *happiness* indeed: and if the great disposer of all things were but to add *perpetuity* to such a situation, you would not envy persons of a more refined taste the *Heaven* you lost, for such a *Paradise* as this.

SUCH indeed was the *happiness* which *Mahomet* promised to his followers: flowery shades and gay dresses, luxurious fare and beautiful women, are described with all the pomp of language in almost every page of his *Alcoran*, as the glorious and charming *rewards* which were to be bestowed on the faithful after the resurrection. And if this were the *felicity* which the *Gospel* promised, *extortioners* and *idolators*, *whoremongers* and *drunkards*, would be much fitter to *inherit the kingdom of GOD*, than the most pious and mortified *saint* that ever appeared on earth. But here, as almost every where else, the *Bible* and the *Alcoran* speak a very different language; and far from leading us into such gross and *sensual* expectations, our Lord *Jesus Christ* has told us that *the children of the resurrection neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are like the angels of GOD, in Heaven*

*Heaven* (a), and enjoy such *pure* and *spiritual* *delights*, as are suited to such *holy* and *excellent* creatures.

It is true that in the book of *Revelations*, stately palaces and shining habits, delicious fruit, and harmonious music are all mentioned, as contributing to the *happiness* of those, who have the honour to inhabit the *New Jerusalem*. But then the style of that obscure and prophetic book, naturally leads us to consider these merely as *figurative phrases*, which are made use of to express the *happiness* that Divine wisdom and love has prepared for the righteous, in a manner accommodated to the weakness of our conceptions: or at least, if in any of these respects provision be made for the entertainment of a *glorified body*, whatever its methods of sensation and perception may be, all will be temperate and regular: and after all, this is *even there* represented but as the least considerable part of our *happiness*, the height of which is made to consist in the most elevated strains of devotion, and in an entire and everlasting devotedness to the service of GOD and of *the Lamb*.

LET us therefore immediately proceed to settle the point in question, by a more particular survey of the *several branches* of the *celestial felicity*, as represented to us *in the word of GOD*: and from thence it will undeniably appear, that were an *unregenerate* soul in the same place with the blessed, and surrounded with the same external circumstances, the temper of his mind would not by any means allow him to participate of their *happiness*. For it is plain the *Scripture* represents the *happiness of Heaven*; as consisting,—in the *perfection* of our minds in *knowledge* and *holiness*;—in the

(a) *Mat. xxii. 30.*

sight and service of the ever-blessed GOD,——in beholding the glory of our exalted Redeemer;——and enjoying the society of glorious angels and perfected saints,——throughout an endless eternity.——Now, sinners, it is impossible you should enter into any such delights as these, while you continue in an unregenerate state.

1. ONE very considerable part of the happiness of Heaven consists, “in that perfection of knowledge and holiness to which the blessed shall be there exalted;” in which the unregenerate soul can have no pleasure.

Thus we are told, that *the spirits of just men shall there be made perfect* (b); for *nothing that defiles, as every degree of moral imperfection does, shall enter into the New Jerusalem* (c). An Old Testament saint conceived of future happiness, as consisting in *being satisfied with the likeness of GOD* (d): a character that is manifestly most agreeable to the view of it, which the beloved disciple gives us, where he says, that *when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is* (e): which must certainly refer to the glories of the mind, which are of infinitely greater importance than the highest imaginable beauty and ornament that can be put upon the corporeal part of our nature in its most illustrious state.

Now from this perfection of holiness, which shall then be wrought in the soul, there will naturally arise an unspeakable complacency and joy, something resembling that which the blessed God himself possesses, in the survey of the infinite and unspotted rectitude of his own most holy nature.

(b) Heb. xiii. 23.      (c) Rev. xxi. 27.      (d) Psal. xvii. 15.  
(e) 1 John iii. 2.

And in proportion to the degree, in which *the eyes of our understandings are enlightened* to discern wherein true excellency consists, will the soul be delighted in the consciousness of such considerable degrees of it in itself.

BUT surely it will be superfluous for me to undertake to demonstrate, that an *unregenerate* soul can have *no part* in this *Divine pleasure*, which implies the compleat *renewal of the mind* as its very foundation. For to imagine that he might, would be supposing him *regenerate*, and *unregenerate* at the same time. As *Mr. Baxter* very well expresses it, “The *happiness of Heaven is holiness*; and to talk of being *happy without it*, is as apparent nonsense, as to talk of being well without health, or being saved without salvation.”

I WOULD only add on this *head*, That the highest improvement of our intellectual faculties could not make us *happy*, without such a *change* in the *affections* and the *will*, as I have before described under the former *general head*. For the more clear and distinct the *knowledge* of true excellence and perfection is, the greater would be your anguish and horror, to see and feel yourselves entirely destitute of it; and it is exceeding probable that spirits of the most elevated genius have the keenest sensation of that infamy and misery, which is inseparable from the prevalence of sinful dispositions in such minds as these.

2. ANOTHER very considerable branch of the *celestial happiness*, is that which arises “from the *contemplation and enjoyment* of the everblessed *GOD*;” but of this likewise an *unregenerate* sinner is incapable.

As our own reason assures us, that *GOD* is the greatest and best of beings, and the most deserving object

object of our enquiries and regards, one would think it would naturally lead us to imagine, that the *perfection* and *happiness* of the human soul consists in the *knowledge* and *enjoyment* of *him*; and that when it arrives at the seat of compleat *felicity*, it must intimately *know him*, and *converse with him*. And in this view, I have sometimes been surprized, that men of such distinguished abilities, as some of the *heathen poets* and *philosophers* appear to have been, should have had no greater regard to the *Supreme being* in the descriptions which they give us of the *future happiness*. That sort of friendship for them, which an acquaintance with their writings must give to a person of any relish for the beauties of composition, makes one almost unwilling to expose the low and despicable ideas, which they often give of the state of their greatest *heroes* in the regions of immortality.—But *the word of GOD* speaks a very different language. *Our Lord* represents the *rewards* to be bestowed on the *pure in heart*, by telling us that *they shall see*, i. e. contemplate and enjoy *GOD* (f): and virtuous souls, who overcome the temptations with which they are here surrounded, shall be *made as pillars in the house of their GOD*, and shall go no more out (g): and it is elsewhere said that *his servants shall serve him, and shall see his face* (h). And *David's* views under a darker dispensation rose to such a degree of refinement, as to say, *As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness* (i); which he mentions as a *felicity* infinitely superior to all the delights of the most prosperous sinner.

BUT NOW, sinners, it is utterly *impossible* that while you continue in an *unregenerate state*, you

(f) Mat. v. 8.

(g) Rev. iii. 12.

(h) Rev. xxii. 3, 4.

(i) Psal. xvii. 15.

should



should behold the face of *GOD* with pleasure. The unutterable *delight* which the blessed inhabitants of *heaven* find in it, arises not merely from the abstract ideas of his essential perfections, but from a *sense of his favour* and love to them. It is *this* that gives a relish to the whole survey, and rejoices the heart of all the saints, both *in Heaven* and *on earth*. He is a *GOD* of awful majesty and irresistible power, of infinite wisdom and unspotted holiness, of unerring justice, irvariable fidelity, and inexhaustible goodness; and *this GOD is our GOD*, he will be our guide and our portion for ever (k). And were it not for this view, let a creature think of *GOD* with ever so much spirit and propriety, he must think of him, and be troubled (l); yea, he must be filled with unutterable horror and confusion, as the *devil* is at the thought of an infinitely perfect Being, in whom he has *no interest*, from whom he has nothing *friendly* to expect; and if nothing *friendly*, then every thing *dreadful*.

Now it is certain, sinners, that while you continue in an *unregenerate state*, under the influence of that *carnal mind* which is *enmity against GOD* (m), and full of unconquerable rebellion against his law, there can be no foundation for a *friendship* between him and your souls; nor for any persuasion, or any apprehension of your *interest* in his *favour* and love. *Friendship*, you know, supposes something of a similitude of nature and sentiment; for as *GOD* himself argues, *how can two walk together except they be agreed* (n)? Now I have before observed to you at large, that *GOD* being of purer eyes than to behold evil (o), must neces-

(k) Psal. xlviii. 14. lxxiii. 26.

(l) Psal. lxxvii. 3.

(m) Rom. viii. 7.

(n) Amos iii. 3.

(o) Hab. i. 13.

sarily *hate all the workers of iniquity : the foolish therefore shall not stand in his sight* (p), or shall not be admitted to such a situation: nor would they indeed be able to endure it.—Let conscience judge what satisfaction you could find in the *presence of a GOD*, that you knew scorned and hated you, even while he suffered you to continue among the croud of his children and servants. The more lively ideas you had of the beauty and perfection of the Divine nature, the more you must *loath yourselves* for being so unlike him, and so abominable to him: and what *pleasure* do you think consistent, with such *self-contempt* and *abhorrence*? Or rather, would not the wretched degeneracy of your nature lead you another way; and a kind of unconquerable *self-love*, joined even with this consciousness of deformity and vileness, lead you to *hate GOD himself*? It is described as the fatal effect of prevailing wickedness in the heart, *my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me* (q). And thus would it probably work in you, and produce in your wretched breasts a mortal *hatred* against him, and an envious *rage* at the thought of his perfect happiness: a state of mind of all others that can be imagined, the most odious, and the most tormenting. How, Sirs, could your hearts, possessed with these diabolical passions, *bear to see* the beams of his glory surrounding you on every side? How could you *bear to hear* the songs and adorations, that were continually addressed to his *throne*; and *to observe* the humble attendance of all *the hosts of Heaven* about it, who perpetually reckon it their honour and happiness to be employed in obedience to his commands? Such a *sight* of the *glory* and *felicity* of your *Divine enemy* would

(p) Psal. v. 5.

(q) Zech. xi. 8:

make you, so far as your limited nature was capable of it, *miserable* even in proportion to the degree in which *he is happy*. This was, no doubt, the torment of the *devils* as soon as they had harboured *a thought of hostility* against God; and the *remembrance of that glory* in which they once saw him, and which they know he still invariably possesses, is surely an everlasting vexation *to them*: and it would be so *to you*, if you were within the *sight of it*.

BUT further, the *blessed in Heaven* find their everlasting entertainment “in the *service of God*.” They rest not day and night, saying, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord GOD Almighty* (r); i. e. they are continually employed, either in the immediate acts of devotion, or in other *services*, in which they still maintain a devotional temper, and are breathing out their souls in holy affections, while their active powers are employed in the execution of his commands. But as I have already shewn you, that while in an *unregenerate state* you could have *no sense of his favour* to you; it is very apparent, that you could have *no sentiments of gratitude and love* towards him. So that while *angels and glorified saints* were breathing out their souls in the most delightful and rapturous *praises*, you must keep a sullen kind of *silence*: or, if it were possible that your *harps and voices* should sound as melodiously as theirs, it would be all *ceremony and shew*; the *music of the heart* would be wanting; and you would look on all the external forms of service but as a *tedious task*, and count it your *misfortune*, that the customs of the place obliged you to attend them. You may the more easily apprehend and believe this, when you consider what little *relish* you now

(r) Rev. iv, 8.

have for those solemnities of *Divine worship*, in which sincere *Christians* have the most lively foretastes of *Heaven*. You know, in your own consciences, that short and interrupted as our public services are, they are the burden of your lives. You know that you say, in your hearts at least, *When will the sabbath be past, and the new moon be gone (s)?* Judge then how insupportable it would be to you, to spend an everlasting sabbath thus. I question not, but to your wretched spirits annihilation would appear vastly preferable to an eternal existence so employed.

3. ANOTHER very considerable branch of the happiness of *Heaven*, is that which arises “from the sight of the glory of an exalted Redeemer;” but for this likewise no unconverted sinner can have any relish.

THIS is a view of the future happiness, which our Lord gives us, when he prays for his people in those memorable words, engraven, as I hope, upon many of our hearts; *Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me (t)*. And he elsewhere promises it, as the great reward he would bestow upon his people; *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall my servant be (u)*. And agreeable to this, the apostle *Paul* represents it as the transporting view in which he considered the happiness of the future world; *I desire*, says he, *to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better (w)*; incomparably beyond any of the enjoyments of the present world which can come into competition with it.—But for this part of the hap-

(s) Amos viii. 5.

(t) John vii. 24.

(u) John xii. 26.

(w) Phil. i. 23.

pineness of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, it is also evident, that you, sinners, can have no relish.

THE sight of Christ will afford holy souls a transporting delight, because they will regard it as the glory of their Redeemer and their friend, and as a pledge and security of their own glory. But what foundation can you, sinners, find for such a joyful sympathy with Christ, and such a comfortable conclusion with regard to yourselves? Such is the wretched degeneracy of your nature, that though Christ be indeed the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely (x), being the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person (y), possessed of every divine perfection and excellence; yet you now slight and neglect him, and discern in him no form nor comeliness, for which he is to be desired (z): and were you unregenerate in Heaven, the same principle would prevail. Now where there is no love to a person, there can be no delight in his converse, nor any pleasure in his happiness. Nay, the contrariety of your nature to his would rather occasion aversion and terror. You could not but know, that the blessed Jesus is holy and undefiled, and separate from sinners (a); that he abhors all moral evil to such a degree, that he laid aside all the glory and entertainments of Heaven; that he might destroy the interest of sin in this world of ours, and might purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (b): and when you should recollect at the same time that sinfulness that continued to reign in your hearts, and made you to every good work reprobate (c), you could not but know that

(x) Cant. v. 10, 16.      (y) Heb. i. 3.      (z) Isa. liii. 2.  
 (a) Heb. vii. 26.      (b) Tit. ii. 14.      (c) Tit. i. 16.

you

you must be *hateful to him*; and therefore could not but *fear*, lest his almighty power should be exercised for your punishment and destruction: and thus *your terror* must rise, in proportion to the sensible evidence you had of his dignity and authority. In a word, you would stand like *guilty rebels* in the presence-chamber of their injured and displeased *Sovereign*: his throne and his sceptre, his robe and his crown, his courtiers and his guards, though in themselves splendid and magnificent objects, only serve to terrify and amaze them, while they display the grandeur and power of their enemy.

4. ANOTHER very considerable branch of the *celestial happiness* will be “the *society* of *angels* and *glorified saints*;” but for this likewise an *unregenerate* sinner must be *unfit*.

You know, that when the *Apostle* speaks of our *alliance* to the *heavenly world*, he represents it as a *social state*; where excellent spirits dwell together, and converse with each other with mutual esteem and endearment: *ye are come*, says he, *to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect* (d). It is *sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, with all the patriarchs and prophets, all the apostles and martyrs *in the kingdom of Heaven* (e): and perhaps you think you shall want nothing more to complete your *happiness*, than to be admitted to a place among them. But reflect a little more attentively upon the circumstances of things, and I am persuaded you will form a different judgment.

(d) Heb. xii. 22, 23.

(e) Mat. vii. 21.

THERE is no reason to doubt, but that at your first entrance in the regions of glory you would be agreeably struck with the *view of those inhabitants*: As for those beauties of their character, which consist in love to GOD, and in zeal for his honour and interest, it is certain, that you would be insensible of *them*; and pay but little regard to them: but the *humanity* and *benevolence* of their *temper* would, no doubt, render them agreeable to you; and so much the more, as self-love might lead you to expect some personal advantage by it. And it is more than possible, that you would be much prejudiced in their favour by those resplendent and attractive *forms* in which they appear; *forms*, no doubt, far more beautiful and engaging than any which the children of men ever saw upon earth. On both these accounts it might be natural enough for you, at first, to address them with an air of *respect*, as persons that you could be glad to be upon good terms with; and in whose *friendship* you could desire to share.

BUT how do you think that any such proposal of *friendship* would be received by an *angel*, or a glorified *saint*? No doubt, if there were any prospect of converting you, or any hope you might be brought to a devout and holy temper, they would immediately become *preachers of righteousness* to you; and endeavour by the most rational, the most pathetic, and the most insinuating address, to awaken and alarm you to a sense of *religion*, and so to form you to a capacity for *happiness*. But they would know, that according to the eternal *constitution of GOD*, there could be no room to entertain such an *hope*; but that *being filthy*, you must be *filthy still* (f): and therefore, as they would

(f.) Rev. xxii. 11.

know you to be *incorrigible*, their love to *GOD*, and their concern to be approved and accepted by him, would prevent their forming any intimate *friendship* with persons whose natures were so contrary to *him*, and on whom *he* looked with such irreconcilable abhorrence. And besides this, their own personal *sanctity* of character would give them an *aversion* to such corrupt and degenerate creatures: so that how much soever they might *pity* your condition, they would turn away from you, as objects, whose presence and converse were not to be endured.

AND do you not easily apprehend, that such a *refusal* on their part would be both *shameful* and very *provoking* to you! For which way could you bear it, to be thus rejected and dishonoured by the most excellent part of the creation; by those whom perhaps you once intimately knew, and with whom you conversed upon equal terms; nay, by many who were once much your inferiors, and whom, perhaps, in the pride of your hearts, you would not condescend to regard? The natural effect of this must surely be, that you would soon be proportionably displeased and *enraged* with the *refusal*, as you were at first *charmed* at their *Appearance*; and when you saw that transporting *pleasure* which they took in the affection and friendship of each other, and the joy which the Divine favour poured into their souls, while *you*, in the very same place, were excluded from these rich entertainments, your heart would soon burn with *envy* and *indignation*; and as much as you before *admired* them, you, upon this, would come to *hate* them. And, perhaps, *that hatred* would put you upon some attempt to interrupt, or even, if it were possible, to destroy *that happiness* which you were not allowed to share. But then, when you saw them continually under the Divine protection, and compassed with  
his



his favour, as with a shield (g), so that your malice could not reach them, all the keenness and rancour of your spirit would recoil upon itself; you would fly from their presence, as insupportable; and would be glad to retire to some meaner apartment, or to hide yourselves in the shades of darkness; so that you might but get rid of the sight of so many dazzling objects, whose lustre, instead of clearing your vitiated eye, would pain and overpower it.

BUT if you should not be transported to this diabolical excess; if it were possible for you to behold the glorified saints, and to live among them, without these envious and tormenting passions; yet surely you would want a relish for the most entertaining part of their conversation. Had you indeed a good natural genius, which to be sure many unconverted sinners have, it might be very agreeable to hear them discoursing of the wonders of nature; and that curiosity, which is, in some measure, incident even to persons of the meanest capacities, would make it pleasant to hear them recount the important history relating to the revolutions of the angelic world, which we on this earth are entirely strangers to, or at least have been very little acquainted with them. But surely the most delightful topics of conversation, which Heaven itself can furnish out, must be those which are religious and divine; the infinite perfections of the ever-blessed GOD; the personal glories and incomparable love of his condescending, but exalted Son; and the sanctifying operations of the blessed Spirit on the soul, transforming it into the Divine Image, and making it meet for eternal glory. Yea, even when the blessed Spirits above are handling philosophical

or *historical subjects*, they still consider them *with a regard to GOD*, as his *perfections* are displayed and illustrated in the *works of his hands*, and in the *conduct of his providence*. And here their *pleasure* flows, not merely from a set of *rational ideas*, which arise in their own minds, or are suggested to them by others: but from the exercise of those *devout affections* upon the blessed GOD, which are correspondent to these several *subjects* of discourse.

AND can you, Sirs, who are *alienated from the divine life* (h), and accustomed to live in a continual neglect and forgetfulness of the *Great Parent of universal nature*, can you *relish* such *subjects* as these? You would, no doubt, be *discontented* and *uneasy* in such a scene: the *heavenly oratory* of this *holy society* would have *no charms* for you; but you would be longing for some of those *vain and worthless companions*, which you were so fond of here upon earth, to hear a merry story, or a song, or to join with them in the pleasures of a debauch.

5. ANOTHER considerable branch of the *happiness of Heaven* arises “from the assured prospect of the *everlasting continuance* of this *“ felicity;”* but, if an *unregenerate* soul could find any entertainment at all in *Heaven*, he certainly could have no ground for such an expectation of its *continuance*.

WHEN the children of GOD on earth think of the *happiness of Heaven*, the *eternity* of it makes a very deep impression on their hearts, and even swallows up their souls with ardent desire and unutterable joy: it raises their esteem, and animates their hope, while they reflect on that *exceeding and eternal weight of glory* (i), that *house not made*

(h) Ephes. iv. 18: (i) 2 Cor. iv. 17.

*with hands, eternal in the Heavens (k), and that inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away (l).—*And no doubt but the *blessed in Heaven* regard it in the same view, and all the *pleasures* they enjoy are vastly increased by the prospect of their *endless duration*; so that by the anticipation of an *eternity* still to come, they do, as it were, every moment enjoy an infinite satisfaction.—But as for you, sinners, while you are so ill-tempered to the *happiness of Heaven*, the prospect of an *eternal abode* there would not, on the principles I have laid down above, be a prospect of *eternal happiness*, but rather, on the whole, of *eternal uneasiness* to you.

BUT suffer me a little to discourse upon *another supposition*; and let me now, for argument sake, wave what I have been so long insisting upon, and *suppose*, that you could so far command the turbulent passions of your own heart, and so unite (as it were) the whole powers of your soul, to attend to the beauty of place, the harmony of music, and whatever else may be supposed capable of regaling the senses or the imagination; as upon the whole, to find *Heaven* a pleasing and *delightful abode*, and to *wish*, that though some of its entertainments were above your taste and capacity, yet you might be allowed an *eternal enjoyment* of the rest: could there be any room for you to *expect* a *perpetual abode* in these blissful seats? No, sinners, you would not be able so much as to *hope* it. The good itself is so great, and *perpetual enjoyment*, even in any degree, has such a kind of infinite value, that I know not how the purest and noblest spirits in Heaven could absolutely have been secure of it, separate from the engagement of a *Divine promise*. And

(k) 2 Cor. v. 1.      (l) 1 Pet. i. 4.

what *Divine promise* would you be able to have recourse to in such a circumstance as we now suppose? Where could you find it in all the book of GOD, that persons of your character should ever *enter into Heaven* at all, much less that you should *for ever* continue there?—You could have therefore no security of the continuance of your *abode in Heaven*, if it were possible that you should *enter* on the possession of it: but when you should consider the unsullied holiness of the ever-blessed *GOD*, the sovereign of this sacred province, and the spotless purity of that gracious *Redeemer*, to whom the government of it is committed, you could not but fear, that you should quickly be seized by the hand of vengeance, be hurled from the battlements of Heaven, and plunged low into the pit of destruction. You know this was the condemnation of the *rebel angels*, and your guilt, compared with that dreadful event, which makes so considerable a scene of the history of Heaven, would, I doubt not, be sufficient to create everlasting jealousy and uneasiness, and to turn every pleasureable circumstance into a source of horror, in the apprehensions of being deprived *eternally* of it.

Thus you see, Sirs, from a particular survey of the various lights in which *Heaven* is represented, and of the *various branches* of which *its happiness* consists, an *unregenerate sinner* is *incapable* of it, even though we should suppose that he was actually admitted to it. Let me intreat you to reflect on all these things, and you will see the reasonableness of that *one remark* with which I shall conclude this discourse.

How *vain* are all those *hopes of Heaven*, which in your present condition you are ready to entertain!

I HAVE

I HAVE been proving at large, that if *GOD* were to admit you to the possession of *Heaven*, which it is certain he never will, you would be incapable of relishing the enjoyments of it: nay, that there would be a solid foundation in your own hearts, for many of the most tumultuous and disquieting passions. *Envy* and *grief*, *fear* and *rage*, those roots of bitterness would spring up even in the *Paradise of GOD*, and turn the fertility of that blessed soil into their own nourishment. And do you imagine that any external accommodations or ornaments could make you easy and comfortable, under the transports of such hellish passions? What if you were to take a man that was tormented with a violent fit of the stone or gout, and to place him in a most delicious garden, or in a palace of marble and cedar, to set him on a throne of gold under a canopy of purple, to clothe him with robes of velvet and embroidery, regaling him with the most delicious fruits and generous wines, and at the same time soothing his ear with all the harmony of sound, which the most melodious symphony of instruments and voices could afford? Would all this magnificence and luxury make him insensible of that anguish which was racking his very vitals? or would not that inward torture rather render him insensible of this association of pleasurable impressions from without? Yea, would it not incline him to suspect, that you intended all these pompous preparations only to deride and insult him? As little would your distempered and unholy souls be capable of relishing the entertainments of *Heaven*, while these entertainments, and these souls of yours, continue what they are at present.

THERE must be therefore a change: and will you consider where that change must be made? If you continue still in your present character and circum-

circumstances, there must be a vast *change in Heaven itself*, before you can be *happy* in it. The whole temper, character, and disposition of every *saint and angel* there, must be *changed* from what it now is, before they can be capable of any friendly and complacential conversation with you. Yea, our *Lord Jesus Christ*, who is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever* (m), must divest himself of those *beauties of holiness*, which are infinitely dearer to him than any external grandeur or authority, before he can receive you *into his kingdom*. Nay, the very *father of lights with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning* (n), must be entirely *changed*. He must lay aside that *holiness* which is essential to his nature, and which is the brightness and glory of it; he must *love that* which he now *hates*, and be *indifferent to that* which he most affectionately *loves*, before he can open his arms to you, and smile upon your souls. And can you dare to *hope* for such an unaccountable, such an inconceivable, *revolution* as this? No, Sirs, infinitely sooner would *GOD change earth into hell*, and bury you, and all of your character, under the ruins of *this world* which you inhabit and pollute, than he would thus tarnish the beauties of *Heaven*, and divest himself of the brightest glory of his own divinity. "*GOD*," says *Archbishop Tillotson*, "has condescended to take our nature upon him, that he might make us capable of happiness; but if this will not do, he will not put off his own nature to make us happy."

WHAT then do you imagine? Do you think that *GOD* will prepare *some separate apartments in Heaven*, furnished with a variety of sensual plea-

(m) Heb. xiii. 8.

(n) James i. 17.

sure, for the entertainments of persons of your character? *some apartments* from whence the tokens of his *presence* shall be withdrawn, from whence the exercise of his *worship* shall be banished, from whence *saints* and *angels* shall retire to make way for those inhabitants, who, like you, have sinned themselves beyond a *capacity* of enjoying God, or of being fit companions for any of his most excellent creatures? This were to suppose the *Christian religion* false, and to contradict the light of *natural reason* too, which not only shews such a disposition of things to be unworthy the Divine sanctity and majesty, but also shews that if there be a *future state*, it must be a *state of misery to wicked men*, in whose minds those vicious habits prevail, which are even now the *beginnings of hell*; which therefore they must carry along with them where-ever they are, in proportion to the degree in which they are predominant.

UPON the whole then, you must evidently see that it is absolutely *necessary* that *you*, sinners, should be changed, if ever you expect to have *any part or lot* in the *future happiness*. And *when* do you expect *that change* should be wrought? Do you expect it when death has done its dreadful office upon you, and your soul arrives at the *invisible world*? Is *the air of it* (if I may be allowed the expression,) *so refined*: that it will immediately purify; and transform every polluted sinner that comes into it? You cannot but know, that the whole tenor of *Scripture* forbids that presumptuous destructive *hope*. It assures us that *there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave* (o); but that we must be *judged according*

(o) Eccl. ix. 10.

to what we have done in the body, and not according to what has past in any separate state; whether the actions we have done be good, or whether they be evil (p).

IF ever therefore you are regenerate at all, it must be while you are here below, in this state of education and trial: and if you continue in your sins till death surprize you, your souls will be for ever sealed up under an irreversible sentence, and by the decree of God, and the constitution of things, will be excluded from happiness, as by no means either entitled to it, or prepared for it. So evident is the truth of this assertion in the text, that *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of GOD.*

AND will you then sit down contentedly under such a conclusion as this, "I shall be excluded from this kingdom, as accursed and profane?" Alas, Sirs, the conclusion is big with unutterable terror and death; as I shall now proceed to shew you at large if my time would allow: for I am next to represent the infinite importance of entering into that kingdom, and consequently of that entire change which has been proved to be necessary to that entrance. But I must reserve that to the next opportunity of this kind. In the mean time let me add, that I doubt not but there are many present, who have heard this description of the *Heavenly world* with delight, and who are saying in their hearts, "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it (q): This is the felicity to which my heart aspires with the most ardent breathing." Such may with the utmost reason regard it as a token for

(p) 2 Cor. v. 10.

(q) Psal. cxxxii. 14.

good,



good, and may go on in a cheerful assurance, that the grace that has made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (r), will at length conduct them to it, in perfect safety and everlasting triumph. Amen.

(r) Col. i. 12.

## SERMON VI.

Of the IMPORTANCE of entering into the  
Kingdom of Heaven.

JOHN III. 3.

— *Except a man be born again he cannot see  
the kingdom of GOD.*

**H**OW impossible it is that an *unregenerate* sinner should see, i. e. enjoy *the kingdom of GOD*, or that future blessedness to which the *gospel* is intended to lead its professors, I have shewn you at large. I have appealed to the *testimony* of GOD's holy *prophets*, and *apostles*, in concurrence with *that* of his *incarnate Son*, to prove that persons of such a character are, by the *invincible constitution* of that kingdom, *excluded* from it. And I have farther in my *last discourse*, proved, that if they were actually *admitted* to it, they would be *incapable* of *relishing its pleasures*; that their *vitiating palate* would have a *distaste* to the choicest *fruits* of the *Paradise of GOD*; yea, that in these blissful regions, *thorns* and *briars* would spring up in their paths, and make them *wretched* in the very seat of *happiness*.

I DOUBT not, but you are in your consciences generally convinced, that the *truth* of these things cannot be contested. You are inwardly persuaded that it is indeed so; and I fear many of you have  
also

also reason to apprehend, that you are of this unhappy number, who are hitherto *strangers to regenerating grace*. But how are your minds *impressed* with this apprehension? Do I wrong you, Sirs, when I suspect that some of them are hardly *impressed* at all? Do I wrong you, when I suspect there are those of you, who have spent the *last week* with very little *reflection* upon what you have heard? The cares and amusements of life have been pursued as before, and you have not taken *one hour* to enter into the thought with *self-application*, and seriously to consider, “I am one of those concerning whom eternal wisdom and truth has pronounced, that, if they continue *such* as at present they are, they *shall not see the kingdom of GOD.*” You have not paused at all upon the awful thought; you have not offered one lively petition to GOD, to beg that you may be recovered from this unhappy state, and brought to a *meetness* for his *kingdom*, and a *title* to it. For *your sakes* therefore, and for the *sakes of others* in your state, having already explained, illustrated, and confirmed the proposition in my *text*, I proceed,

III. To represent to you the *importance* of the argument suggested here; or to shew you, how much *every unregenerate sinner* ought to be *alarmed* to hear, that while he continues in his present state, *he cannot see the kingdom of GOD.*

AND oh! that while I endeavour to illustrate this, my words might enter into your minds as *goads*, and might fix there as *nails fastened in a sure place*! The substance of my argument is given forth by the *one great shepherd* (a); may

(a) Eccles. xii. 11.

the prosecution of it be blessed, as the means of reducing some *wandering sheep* into his *fold*!

Now in order to illustrate the force of this argument I beseech you seriously to consider,—what *this kingdom* is, from which you are in danger of being for ever *excluded*;—and what will be the *condition* of all those, who shall be *finally cut off* from any interest in it.

[1.] CONSIDER “what *that kingdom* is, from  
“ which the *unregenerate*, or those who are  
“ not *born again*, shall be *excluded*.”

AND here you are not to expect a *complete representation* of it: for *that* is an attempt in which the tongues of *angels*, as well as *men*, might fail; or how proper soever their language might be in itself, to us it would be unintelligible; for *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which GOD hath prepared for them that love him* (b). And surely these *final* and most illustrious *preparations of his love* must, beyond all others, exceed our description and conception: A *minister* that with the apostle *Paul*, had been *caught up into the third Heaven*, if he would attempt to speak of the glorious scenes which were there opened to him, must say, they were *unutterable things* (c); and one, that with *John*, had *lain in the bosom of Christ* himself, must say, as *that Apostle* did, *It does not yet appear what we shall be* (d): And indeed, when we go about to discourse of it, I doubt not but the blessed *angels* pity the *weakness* of our apprehensions and expressions, and know that we do but *debase* the subject, when we attempt the most to *exalt and adorn* it.

(b) 1 Cor. ii. 9.

(c) 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4.

(d) 1 John iii. 2.

YET there are *just and striking representations* of this *kingdom*, made in the *word of GOD*; and we are *there* often told in general, wherein it shall consist. You no doubt remember that I was in the *last* of these *Lectures*, going over several important views of it. I then told you, it will consist in the *perfection* of our souls in *knowledge* and *holiness*; in the *sight of GOD*, and our blessed *Redeemer*; in exercising the most delightful affections towards them, and in being for ever employed in rendering them the most honourable services; in conversing with *saints* and glorious *angels*; and in the assured expectation of the *eternal continuance* of this blessedness in all its branches. That this is the *scriptural representation* of the matter, I proved to you from many express *testimonies* in the *word of GOD*: and I doubt not, but you have often heard the excellency of each of these views represented at large, in distinct discourses on each.

I WILL not therefore now *repeat* what has been said upon such occasions: but will rather direct you to some *general considerations*, which may convince you of the *excellency* of *that state and world*, from which, if you continue *unregenerate*, you must for ever be *excluded*: for I would fain fix it upon your minds, that it is *in this connection*, and *for this purpose*, that the *representation* is made. And oh! that you might so review it, as no longer to *neglect so great salvation* (e), nor act as if you *judged such everlasting life* to be beneath your attention, and *unworthy* your care and regard (f)! You cannot think it so when you consider,—that it is represented in *Scripture* under the most *magnificent images*;—that it is the state which *GOD* has prepared for the display of *his glory*.

(e) Heb. ii. 3.

(f) Acts xiii. 46.

and the *entertainment* of his most *favourite* creatures;—that it is the great *purchase* of the *blood* of his *eternal* Son;—that it is the main *work* of his *sacred* spirit to *prepare* mens hearts for it;—and the great *business* of our inveterate enemy *the Devil*, by all possible means, to *prevent* our obtaining it.—*Each* of these considerations may much illustrate the *excellency* of it, and *all* taken together yield a most convincing demonstration.

1. CONSIDER, “ by what a variety of *beautiful* and *magnificent* images this *happiness* is represented in the *Word* of *GOD* ;” and that may convince you of its *excellency*.

WHEN the blessed *GOD* himself would raise our conceptions of a *state* of being, so much superior to any thing we have ever seen or known, unless he intended a *personal* and *miraculous* revelation of it, he must borrow *our* language, and in painting *the* glory of *Heaven* must take his colours from *earth*. And here the magnificence of a *city*, the sweetness of a *garden*; the solemn pomp of a *temple*, the lustre of a *crown*, and the dignity of a *kingdom*, strike powerfully on the human mind, and fill it with veneration and delight. But when such *figures* as these are borrowed from *this* low world of ours, faintly to shadow out *that* which is *above*, there is always the *addition* of some important *circumstance*; to intimate how far the *celestial* original exceeds the brightest *earthly* glory, by which the *Divine* condescension has vouchsafed to describe it.

THE enumeration of a variety of *scriptural* descriptions will set *these* remarks in the strongest light.—If therefore *Heaven* be described as a *city*, it is *the* *New* *Jerusalem*, *the* *city* of our *GOD*, *that* cometh down from *GOD* out of *Heaven* :

ven (g) : the pavement of its *streets* is all of *pure gold*, its *gates* are *pearl*, and its *foundation jewels* (h).—If it be a *garden*, it is *the Paradise of GOD* (i), and so far superior to *that* which he at first prepared and furnished out for the entertainment of *Adam* in his *state of innocence*, that it is *planted on every side* with *the tree of life* (k), of which there was but *one alone* in the *garden of Eden*; and is *watered*, not with such common *rivers* as the *Tigris* and *Euphrates*, but with that living, copious, inexhausted stream, *the river of the water of life*, which *proceeds from the throne of GOD* (l), and gently glides along through all its borders.—When it is represented as a *temple*, we are told that instead of a *golden ark* placed in the remotest recess, to which only the *high priest* might *once a year* approach, and on which he might not be allowed to *gaze*, the *throne of GOD* is erected *there* (m), perpetually surrounded with *myriads* of worshippers who *see his face*, and like the *high priest* when clothed in his richest robes, *have his name* written in *their foreheads* (n) : instead of the feeble rays of that *golden candlestick*, whose *lamps* shone in the *holy place*, the heavenly temple is illuminated in a more glorious manner, and *needs no candle*, neither *light of the sun*; for *the glory of GOD* continually *enlightens it*, and *the Lamb is the light thereof* (o) : Nay, we are assured that its *sacred ministers* are made *kings* as well as *priests unto GOD* (p); and accordingly being *clothed in white raiment*, they *have crowns of gold on their heads* (q); as well as *harps and*

(g) Rev. iii. 12. xxi. 2.      (h) Rev. xxi. 19, 21.      (i) Rev. ii. 7.  
 (k) Rev. xxii. 2.      (l) Rev. xxii. 1.      (m) Rev. vii. 15.  
 (n) Rev. xxii. 4.      (o) Rev. xxi. 23. xxii. 5.  
 (p) Rev. i. 6.      (q) Rev. iv. 4.

golden vials, or censers full of incense in their hands (r): and lest we should think these pompous services are only the entertainments of some peculiarly sacred seasons, we are told that, *they rest not day nor night* (s), adoring him that sits upon the throne, and are fixed as pillars in his temple, to go out no more (t).—Again, if it be spoken of as a crown, it is represented as incorruptible (u); a crown of glory that fadeth not away (w).—And when it is called a kingdom, the Scripture does not only add, as here in the text, that it is *the kingdom of GOD*, which must certainly exalt the idea of it; but that it is a kingdom which cannot be moved (x), an everlasting kingdom (y): nay, to carry our thoughts to the highest degree of dignity and glory, it is spoken of as a sitting down with Christ on his throne (z).

BUT further, the value of these illustrious representations is much enhanced, if we consider the character of the persons by whom they are made. They were persons well acquainted with these things, having received their information from a Divine Revelation, and from the immediate visions of God. They were also persons of such sublime and elevated sentiments, that they had a sovereign contempt for all the enjoyments of time and sense, even those which the generality of mankind set the greatest value upon; and counted all things but loss for the knowledge of Christ (a), and the testimony of a good conscience (b), while they looked not at temporal, but at eternal things (c). They could deliberately, constantly, and even cheerfully

(r) Rev. v. 8.

(s) 1 Cor. ix. 25.

(t) 2 Pet. i. 11.

(u) 2 Cor. i. 12.

(v) Rev. iv. 8.

(w) 1 Pet. v. 4.

(x) Rev. iii. 21.

(y) 2 Cor. iv. 18.

(z) Rev. iii. 12.

(a) Heb. xii. 28.

(b) Phil. iii. 8.



resign all the *riches*, and *honours*, and carnal *pleasures*, which they might have purchased by their apostacy from religion; and were ready to embrace *bonds*, *imprisonments*, or *death* itself, when it met them in the way of their duty.—Now certainly *a glory*, with which such holy, wise, and heroick persons were so passionately enamoured, and which they describe with such *pathos* of language, and such extasy of delight, while they were trampling with so generous a disdain on every thing which *earth* calls good and great, must deserve our very attentive regard. And *this* it yet more evidently will appear to do, if we consider,

2. “ IT is the state and world, which *GOD* has  
 “ prepared for the display of *his glory*, and  
 “ the *entertainment* of the most favoured of  
 “ his creatures.”

THIS argument seems to be hinted at, when it is said, (as in the place I referred to before) *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which GOD hath prepared for them that love him* (d). *GOD* well knows the *capacity* of his creatures, and how much *happiness* they are able and fit to receive; and he can *fill* their capacities to the utmost; nay, he can farther *enlarge* them to what degree he pleases, that they may *admit* superior degrees of glory and felicity. *A happiness*, therefore, which he has prepared on purpose, to *display* the riches of his *magnificence* and *love*, and to shew what he can do to *delight* his creatures, must certainly be in some measure *proportionable*, if I may so express it, to the *infinity* of his own sacred *perfections*. Let us then seriously consider who *GOD* is; and attentively dwell in our meditation, on the extent

(d) 1 Cor. ii. 9.

of his *power*, and the riches of his *bounty*; and but *conception* of the *happiness of Heaven* must be raised to something *more glorious*, than the most *emphatical words* can perfectly describe.

AND here, to assist our imagination in some degree, let us look round us, and take a survey of this *visible world*. This *earth*, how conveniently has he furnished it, how beautifully has he disposed it, how richly has he adorned it! What various and abundant *provision* has he made for the subsistence, the accommodation, and the entertainment of the *creatures* that inhabit it! and especially of *man*, in whom this scheme and system of things appears to centre, and to whom it is all most wisely and graciously referred! Yet *earth* is the habitation of a race of *mean and degenerate creatures*, who are but in a *state of trial*; nay, it is the habitation of thousands and ten thousands of *God's incorrigible enemies*, with whom *he is angry every day* (e). Already it is marked with some awful characters of the *Divine displeasure*; and the *Scripture* assures us, that it is *reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men* (f). Yet even *this earth* is not a spectacle unworthy our regard; nor can we, if we allow ourselves to survey it with becoming attention, behold it without an affecting mixture of admiration, of love, and of joy: *passions* that will strike us yet more powerfully; if from *this earth* of ours we raise our eyes to the *visible Heavens*; and there behold the glory of the *sun*, the brightness of the *moon*, and all the numerous *hosts of Heaven* that attend in her train. Who that considers, with any degree of attention, their magnitude, their lustre, their motion, and their influence,

(e) Psal. vii. 11.

(f) 2 Pet. iii. 7.

can forbear crying out, *Oh Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the Heavens* (g) ! And when, with even these in our view, we further reflect, that there is another apartment, as yet invisible, of which this spangled firmament is but, as it were, the shining veil; an apartment, where the great Creator and Governor of all has fixed his stated residence, and erected the *throne of his glory*; even that *throne* which is for ever surrounded by all the most holy and excellent of his creatures; we must be convinced, it is something *more beautiful*, and *more magnificent* than this harmonious system itself. And, methinks, when we have said *more beautiful and more magnificent than this*, imagination is ready to fail us, and to leave the mind dazzled and overwhelmed with an *effulgency of lustre* which it cannot delineate, and can scarce sustain. Yet will our venerable apprehensions of it be farther assisted, if we consider,

3. THAT *the kingdom of Heaven* is “the great purchase of the blood of GOD’s only begotten Son;” and therefore to be sure it must be inconceivably valuable.

IF you are at all acquainted with your *Bibles*, you must know, that we are *by sin* in a state of *alienation from GOD* (h); that we have forfeited all our title to his love, and stood justly exposed to his severe displeasure; and that it is *Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come* (i). Now if we owe it to *his merit* and atonement *that we live* (k), much more are we to ascribe it to him, if we are raised to any superior degree of *happiness*. If *GOD* could not, with honour to his

(g) Psal. viii. 1.

(h) Ephes. iv. 18.

(i) 1 Thess. i. 10.

(k) 1 John iv. 9.

justice,

justice, have suffered us, without such a *propitiation*, to have passed off with impunity: much less could he, without it, have received us to his embraces, and have advanced us to *sit with him on his throne* (l). Accordingly it is said of the *blessed martyrs* in the *heavenly world*, even of those who had so gloriously distinguished their fidelity and zeal, and *loved not their lives unto the death* (m); that they had *washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb* (n): and they gratefully acknowledge it in their hymns of praise, that *Christ had redeemed them to GOD by his blood, and had made them kings and priests unto GOD* (o).

Now let us seriously reflect, and consider what this *blood of the Lamb* is. The apostle *Peter* tells us, that *silver and gold*, and all the peculiar treasures of kings and princes, are but *corruptible things* (p), or perishing and worthless trifles, when compared with it. And no wonder it is represented in such exalted language, when we consider it was *the blood of the only begotten Son of GOD*, who is *the brightness of his father's glory, and the express image of his person* (q), and indeed, *one with him* (r), being possessed of a nature truly and properly *divine*; so that it is called *the blood of GOD* (s). We may well argue, even from these transient surveys, that it was some *important happiness*, which he came to procure at so expensive a rate. Had *an angel* been sent down from *Heaven*, we should naturally have concluded, it must have been upon some *momentous errand*: surely then, when *the Lord of angels* comes down,

(l) Rev. iii. 21.

(m) Rev. xii. 11.

(n) Rev. vii. 14.

(o) Rev. v. 9, 10.

(p) 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

(q) Heb. i. 3.

(r) John x. 30.

(s) Acts xx. 22.

not only to *live on earth*, but to *expire* in bitter agonies on the cross, to purchase a benefit for us, we may be well assured, that *this benefit* must be *very considerable*. Our Lord Jesus Christ must certainly set a very great value upon it, for he would not have purchased it at such a price: and we are sure, *the value* that he apprehended in it must be *its true value*. He could not be imposed upon by any *false appearance* of glory and splendour: he *despised*, with a just and generous contempt, *all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them* (t): and he was also well acquainted with the *celestial kingdom*, having so long dwelt in it, and so long presided over it: yet so highly does he *esteem it*, that he speaks of it upon all occasions, as the highest possible *gift* of Divine bounty, the richest *preparation* and noblest *contrivance* of Divine love: yea, he regards it as a *felicity so great*, that when he conducts his people into it, with the last solemn pomp of the judgment-day, it is said, *he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied* (u), allowing it to be a just *equivalent* for all he has done, and all he has suffered in so glorious a cause.

4. THE *excellency* of the *heavenly kingdom* will further appear, if we consider, that “it is the *main work* of the *spirit of GOD* upon men’s hearts, to *prepare* them for an *admittance* into it.”

You well know, that the blessed *spirit of GOD* is spoken of as that *Divine Agent*, by whom *all the hosts of Heaven* were created, and all God’s various works produced (w); and it is *he* that *knows the things of GOD*, even as *the human*

(t) Mat. iv. 8, 10.  
Psal. xxxiii. 6.

(u) Isa. liv. 11.

(w) Job xxxiii. 4.

*spirit knows the things of a man (x).* Now it is his peculiar office in the œconomy of our redemption, to form the soul to a meetness for glory. Accordingly, when the apostle *Paul* had been reminding the *Corinthians*, that while they continued in their sinful state, they were unfit for the kingdom of *GOD*; he adds, *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our GOD (y).*

THAT the *Spirit* should condescend to engage at all in such a work, must give us a very sublime idea of the end at which it aims. But much more will that idea be raised, when we consider with what a variety, and what a constancy of operations he begins, continues, and perfects it. He attempts it, (as we shall hereafter more particularly shew you) sometimes by convictions of terror, and sometimes by insinuations of love; and by one method or another, in the hearts of all the heirs of this glory, he works so great a change, that it is represented by turning a heart of stone into a heart of flesh (z), by raising the dead from their graves (a), yea, by producing a new creation (b). For this does he watch over the soul with the tenderest care, and continues his friendly offices, to recover it from relapses, and gradually to form it to advancing degrees of sanctity, till at length it be enabled to perfect holiness in the fear of *GOD* (c). Nay, so intent is this *Sacred Agent* on the important work, that when sinners most insolently and ungratefully reject him, and by resisting him oppose their own happiness, he does not immediately

(x) 1 Cor. ii. 11. (y) 1 Cor. vi. 11. (z) Ezek. xxxvi. 26.  
 (a) Ezek. xxxvii. 13. Eph. ii. 5, 6. (b) 2 Cor. v. 17.  
 Eph. ii. 10. (c) 2 Cor. vii. 1.

leave them; he strikes them again and again; and waits upon them for succeeding days, and months, and years: and when, perhaps, *the sincere convert* makes the most *ungrateful return* for the experience of his goodness, even after he has acknowledged, and at length obeyed it; when under the fatal transport of some ungoverned passion, and the influence of some strong temptation, he acts as if he were intent upon *tearing down the work* of the *spirit of GOD* upon his soul, and *driving him* for ever *away*; yet in how many instances does he *return again* after all these injuries, pleading the cause of GOD with a sweetly prevailing eloquence, and thus *healing the wound*, and *repairing the breach*, and making it perhaps stronger than before? And all this, *for what*? That the happy subject of all these *kind operations* may be formed to a *fitness* for the *kingdom of Heaven*.—And are we to regard this *blessed Spirit* as an *unmeaning agent*, or as incapable of judging of the *importance* of *this end* for which he acts? Is that *almighty energy* of his employed in an insignificant manner? Surely *Nicodemus*, slow of understanding as he was, must apprehend the *importance* of *entering into the kingdom of Heaven*, when he heard, that in order to be *admitted* to it, *a man must be born of the Spirit*. And let me add once more,

5. THAT the *excellency* of the *heavenly kingdom* may further be argued “from the *eagerness* with which *the enemy of souls* is *endeavouring* to *prevent our entrance* into it.”

You know *the Devil* is always represented as the *inveterate enemy* of our *happiness*. His rage is expressed by that of a *roaring lion*, that *walks about*, *seeking whom he may devour* (d); and with

(d) 1 Pet. v. 8.

unwearied diligence he is continually employed in forming and pursuing his temptations: And *this is the grand design* of all, that he may *exclude us* from the promised *felicity*. While sinners are in their *unregenerate state*, he endeavours to engage all their regards to the objects of time and sense; and for that purpose he continually presents them with a variety of entertainments and amusements suited to their respective tempers and circumstances. If they are awakened to any serious concern about their eternal salvation, he uses his utmost address to divert their minds from an attendance to it: and for this purpose he displays before them *all the allurements of sin* in its most engaging forms; and if they are not captivated with these, he often puts on a *face of terror*, and endeavours to affright them from religion by the most gloomy representations of it, or by horrible and distracting suggestions, “that it is now for ever *too late* to attain it.” Or if Divine grace surmount all this opposition, and the sinner resolutely chuses his portion in *Heaven*, and puts his soul into the hands of Christ to be conducted to it; the malice of *Satan* pursues him even to that sacred retreat, which he has sought in the arms of his *Saviour*; and if he cannot *prevent* the soul from *entering into Heaven*, he will at least labour to bring it into such a state of *negligence*, and to seduce it into those *delays* and *relapses* which may divert its regards to that blessed world which may cloud its evidences of it, and may at least, as much as possible, diminish the degree of its glory there.

Now permit me, in this instance, to turn the artillery of this cunning enemy against himself, and to argue the excellency of *this kingdom*, from the zeal and attachment with which he endeavours to obstruct your attaining it. Though *Satan* be now a very



a very *degenerate* creature, he was once an *angel of light*, and still retains much of the *knowledge*, though he has lost the *rectitude* and *integrity* of the *angelic nature*. And he particularly knows *what Heaven is*, because he was once an inhabitant there; and while he is *endeavouring* to persuade the sinner to prefer *earth* before it, he does, *by that very endeavour*, incontestably prove, that he himself knows the *contrary*, and is fully apprized that there is *nothing here* to be compared with the *felicity* of the *future state*. And therefore, while he seeks the *destruction of the soul*, he can leave it in the enjoyment of all its *worldly prosperity*; nay, he will attempt to lead him into methods, by which *this prosperity* may be promoted and increased.

AND thus, Sirs, I have endeavoured a little to represent to you, *what this kingdom of Heaven is*, from which we are assured that *unconverted sinners* shall for ever be *excluded*. I have argued its *excellency*—from the *representations* which are made of it in the *word of GOD*—from its being the *preparation of Divine love*—from its being the *purchase of a Redeemer's blood*—and the *end* to which, on the one hand, the *glorious operations* of the *blessed Spirit* lead—and of which, on the other hand, all the *stratagems* and *assaults* of the *prince of darkness* are intended to *deprive us*.—If therefore, there be truth in *Scripture*, if there be wisdom in *Heaven*, or policy in *Hell*, it must surely be *infinitely important*. And will any of you be such *mean-spirited creatures*, as, when *this happiness* is proposed to you, basely to relinquish the pursuit of it, and to sacrifice *this blessed hope* to any *perishing life* of mortal life? Surely it would be *madness*; though nothing more were to be apprehended than the *loss of it*; and though, when *Heaven were lost*, all that *earth can give* should remain,

remain, if not to counterbalance *the loss*, yet at least to make you *less sensible* of it. But the weight of the argument will much more evidently appear, if you consider,

[2.] WHAT will at last *become* of all those who are *excluded* from this *heavenly kingdom*.

AND here I beseech you to ask your own consciences, whether they be not inwardly persuaded,—that *those* who are *excluded from Heaven*, will remain in a state of existence, in which they will be ever *sensible of their loss*,—and will be delivered over by Divine vengeance into that *seat of torment*, which GOD has prepared for the *punishment* of his implacable and incorrigible *enemies*.—*This* many of you do undoubtedly *believe* of such persons in general: *believe it* therefore of yourselves, if you are, and continue, in an *unregenerate state*.

1. “You will still continue in a state of existence,  
“ in which you will be ever *sensible of your*  
“ *loss.*”

It might afford some wretched kind of consolation to you, if, as soon as you died out of this world, your *being*, or your *apprehensive powers* were immediately to *cease*. Then *the loss of Heaven* would only be an affliction to you in your dying moments, when you saw the *enjoyments of Heaven* were *come to an end*, and that you must have *no part* in any *future happiness*. But alas, Sirs, you cannot but know that when your *bodies are dead*, and consumed in their graves, your *thinking faculties* will still be *continued* to you: and oh, that you would seriously reflect, how they will then be *employed*! You will then be *thinking* what you have *done* in life, what you have *chose* for your *happiness*, and what has been the *consequence* of that *choice*. You will look round *in vain* for such *accommodations* and *pleasures*, as you were once most fond

fond of: but *they* will be *no more*; and when you perceive them *vanished*, like the visionary amusements of a *dream*, you will lift up your astonished eyes towards the *regions of glory*. And you indeed will have a lively *view of them*: but to what purpose will *that view* serve? Only through the righteous vengeance of GOD, to *aggravate* your *misery* and *despair*. "Alas," will you think "there are *millions of creatures* yonder in *Heaven*, " who are *rejoicing* in the sight and favour of " *GOD*, and are as full of *happiness* as their na- " tures can contain, and shall be so *for ever*; while " *I am cut off* from all *share* in the Divine bounty, " *Rivers of pleasure* are flowing in upon *them*, " while *not one drop* is sent down to *me*; nor could " I obtain it, though I were to ask the favour from " the *least of Christ's servants* there. *I am cast* " *out* as an *accursed wretch*, with whom *GOD* " and his holy and blessed creatures will have *no* " farther *intercourse*, or *communion*: and why *am* " *I thus cast out*? and why *am I thus cast off* " from *GOD's* favour, and driven from his presence, " while *so many* that dwelt with me on earth are " *admitted* to it? *My nature* was originally as " *capable of happiness* as *theirs*; and though it " was sadly *degenerate*, it might, *like theirs*, have " been *renewed*. *GOD* was once *offering me* that " *grace*, by which my disordered soul might have " been *transformed*, and I might have been *fitted* " for the *regions of glory*: but *I despised* all these " offers, and gave the preference to those fading " *vanities*, which, alas! have for ever forsaken " me. And now *they that were ready* are gone " *in* to the delightful banquet, and the door is " *shut* (e); the everlasting gates are shut for ever,

(e) Mat. xxv. 10.

“ and barred against *me*. And here I must lie at  
 “ this miserable distance, *envying* and *raging* at  
 “ *their happiness*, of which, whatever sight or  
 “ knowledge I may have of it, I must *never, never,*  
 “ *never partake.*”

SUCH *reflections* as these, Sirs, will cut deep into your souls; and accordingly *our Lord* declares to impenitent sinners in his own days, *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see others sitting down in the kingdom of GOD, and you yourselves thrust out* (f). And if you would *reflect*, you might easily *apprehend this*. How would you be enraged at yourselves, if by your folly you had neglected securing a plentiful estate, when it was offered to you on the most easy terms; and you actually saw *others*, once your *equals*, and perhaps your *inferiors*, in the possession of it, in consequence of having taken those methods which you stupidly neglected? the *reflection*, I doubt not, would very much *impair the pleasure* you might find in other comfortable and agreeable circumstances. How much more *insupportable* then will *the loss of Heaven* appear to you, when you come to see, and know, *what it is you have lost*, and have *nothing* to relieve or support you, under the painful recollection?

It is to no purpose to *object*, that upon the principles of my *last discourse*, there will be no room to *lament* your *exclusion* from those *entertainments*, which you would be *incapable of relishing* if you were *admitted* to them: for you will then *see*, and *lament that incapacity* as a very great *misery*. As if a man, who was naturally fond of feasting and mirth, should see a great many *regaling themselves*, and *revelling about him*, while he

(f) Luke xiii. 28.

was languishing under some *painful distemper*, which made him *incapable* of joining in the entertainment; he would yet *grieve* that he had no *part* in it: And it would be the *increase*, rather than the *alleviation* of his uneasiness, that it was *his sickness* which unfitted him for it; especially if, as in your case, it was *a sickness* which he had brought upon himself by his own *jolly*, and for which he had been offered an easy, pleasant, and infallible *remedy*, which he had refused to use till the *malady* was grown utterly *incurable*. One would imagine, *this thought* would be enough to impress you; but if it do not, let me *intreat*, and even *charge* you, to consider,

2. THAT if you are *excluded* from the *kingdom of Heaven*, “ you will be consigned over to  
 “ those *regions of darkness, despair, and*  
 “ *misery*, which GOD has *prepared* for those  
 “ *unhappy criminals*, who are the objects of  
 “ his final displeasure, and whom he will  
 “ render everlasting monuments of his wrath.”

THERE is something in human nature, that starts back at the thought of *Annihilation* with strong reluctance; and yet how many thousands are there in *this miserable world*, who would with all their souls fly to it as a *refuge*? *They shall seek death*, as an inspired writer strongly expresses it, *and shall not find it; and shall desire to die and death shall flee from them* (g). I will not attempt to enter into a detail of the *horrors*, attending the *place and state*, into which all who are *excluded* from the glories of the *heavenly world* shall be cast, and in which they shall be *fired*. Let that one awful *Scripture* suffice for a *specimen* of many more: in which we are told, that *every one whose name was not found*

(g) Rev. ix, 6.

*written in the book of life, (or who was not registered in the number of those, who were to inhabit the New Jerusalem or the kingdom of Heaven,) was cast into the lake of fire (h), or, as it is afterwards expressed, into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (i). Think of this, and ask your own hearts, you that are so impatient of the little evils of mortal life, whether you can endure to take up your abode for ever in devouring fire, or whether you can dwell with everlasting burnings(k)? Yet these are the images by which the word of GOD represents it; to be plunged as in a sea of liquid fire, whose flames are exasperated and heightened, by being fed with brimstone; nay, as the Prophet speaks, by a copious stream of brimstone, so expressly appointed by GOD himself, that this, as well as the river of the water of life, is represented as proceeding immediately from him: he has made tophet deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood, and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it (l).*

IT is painful to a tender mind to *think of this*, as what its fellow-creatures are obnoxious to: it is grievous to *speak of it in these dreadful terms*. But who are we, that we should be *more merciful than GOD?* Or rather, how can we imagine it is *mercy*, to avoid speaking of the appointment of infinite wisdom, for the *punishment of impenitent sinners?* What *mercy* were that, Sirs, to avoid to mention *these terrors* to you, and to neglect to warn you of them, because they are *great?* which is indeed the very reason why the *Scripture* thus pathetically describes them.

(h) Rev. xx. 15.      (i) Rev. xxi. 9.      (k) Isa. xxxiii. 14.  
(l) Isa. xxx. 33.

AWAY therefore with this foolish, this treacherous *compassion*, which chuses rather to leave men to be consumed, than to disturb their slumbers! Think, Sirs, of *that wretched glutton*, whom *Christ* describes as *lifting up his eyes in hell, being in torments; seeing the regions of the blessed at an unapproachable distance, and begging in vain that one drop of water might be sent to cool his tongue*, amidst all the raging thirst with which he was *tormented in this flame* (m). Regard it attentively; for *as GOD lives, and as your soul lives*, if you continue in an *unrenewed state*, you see in *that wretch* the very *image and representation of yourselves*. Yes, sinners, *I testify it to you this day*, that intolerable as it seems, it will, *on that supposition*, be your own *certain fate*; or to speak much more properly, your *righteous, but inevitable doom*. *Heaven and earth* will desert you in that dreadful hour: or, if the inhabitants of both were to join to *intercede* for you, it would be *in vain*. *Sentence* will be past, and *execution* done: *Hell* will *open its mouth* to receive you, and *shut it again* for ever to inclose you, with thousands, and ten thousands more, among whom you will not find one to comfort you, but every one ready to afflict you. *Then* shall you know the *value* which *God* sets upon *his heavenly kingdom*, by the judgments he inflicts upon you for neglecting and despising it; and *then* shall you know the *importance* of being *born again*, that *only means* by which *Hell* can be avoided, and *Heaven* secured.

AND let me farther add, that *conviction* will *quickly come* in this terrible way, if you are not *now prevailed upon to consider these things; things*, which if you have the least regard to the *word of*

(m) Luke xvi. 23, 24.

**GOD**, you cannot but notionally *believe*. Do not then go about to *annihilate* (as it were) these prospects to your mind, by placing them *at a long distance*. The *distance* is not so great as to deserve a mention: *The patience of GOD* will not wait upon you for *thousands*, or even *hundreds* of years: you have *a few mortal days*, in which to consider of the matter; or rather, you have *the present moment* to consider of it. And if you improve the opportunity, it is *well*; but if not, the just and uniform methods of the Divine administration shall proceed, though it should be *to your ruin*. GOD has vindicated the honours of his violated *law*, and despised *gospel*, upon millions, who with *the rebel-angels*; by whom they have been seduced, are even now *reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day* (n); and he will as surely vindicate them upon you. *If you do not repent, if you are not regenerate, you shall all likewise perish* (o), and not one of you shall escape.

AND thus I close this copious and important argument: *this argument* in which *life and death*, salvation and damnation are concerned. View it, my friends, *in all its connection*, and see in what part of it *the chain* can be broken. Will you say, that *without regeneration* you can secure an interest in the *kingdom of Heaven*, though *the constitution of Heaven* oppose it, and all the declarations of *GOD's word* stand directly against it; and though *nature* itself reclaim, and *conscience* testify your *incapacity* to enjoy it? Or will you say, that being *excluded from it*, you shall suffer no considerable *damage*, though you *lose* so glorious a state, the noblest *preparation of Divine love*, the *purchase of redeeming*

(n) Jude, ver. 5.

(o) Luke xiii. 3.



*blood*, and the *end* of the *spirit's operation* on the soul; though you ever remain *sensible* of your loss, and be consigned over to *dwell in that flaming prison*, which *GOD* has prepared for the *devil* and his *angels*, and where all the terrors of his righteous judgments are made known?

BUT if you are indeed inwardly *convinced* of the *truth* and *importance* of these things, and will go away, and act as before, without *any regard* to them, I can say no more. The *reason of man*, and the *word of GOD* can point out no stronger arguments, than *an infinite good* on the one hand, and *an infinite evil* on the other.

*HEAR* therefore, *Oh Heavens*, and *give ear*, *Oh earth!* and let *angels* and *devils* join their *astonishment*; that *creatures* who would strenuously contend, and warmly exert themselves, I will not say merely for an *earthly kingdom*, but in an affair where only a *few pounds*, or perhaps a *few shillings* or *pence* were concerned, are *indifferent* here, where, by their own confession, a *happy* or *miserable ETERNITY* is in question. For *indifferent*, I fear, some of you are and will continue. I have represented these things in the integrity of my heart, *as in the sight of GOD*, not in artful forms of speech, but in the genuine language, which the strong emotions of my own soul, in the views of them most naturally dictated. Yet I think it not at all improbable, that *some of you*, and some perhaps who do not now imagine it, will, as soon as you return home, divert your thoughts and discourses to other objects; and may perhaps, as heretofore, *lie down upon your beds* without spending one quarter of an hour, or even one serious minute, in lamenting your *miserable state* before *GOD*, and seeking that help and deliverance which his grace alone can give. But if you thus lie down, make, if

you can, a *covenant with death*, that it may not break in upon your slumbers; and an agreement with *hell* (p), that before the return of the morning, it may not flash in upon your careless souls another kind of *conviction*, than they will now receive from the voice of *reason* and the *word of GOD*.

(p) Isa. xxviii. 15.

## SERMON VII.

Of the Necessity of DIVINE INFLUENCES  
to produce REGENERATION in the Soul.

TITUS III. 5, 6.

*Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

IF my business were to explain and illustrate *this Scripture* at large, it would yield an ample field for accurate criticism and useful discourse, and more especially would lead us into a variety of *practical remarks*, on which it would be pleasant to dilate in our meditations. It evidently implies, “that those who are *the saved of the Lord*, are brought to the *practice of good works*,” without which *faith is dead* (a), and all pretences to a *saving change* are not only vain, but insolent. Yet it plainly testifies to us, “that our *salvation*, and acceptance with God, is not to be ascribed to these, but to the *Divine mercy*; which mercy operates by *sanctifying our hearts*, through the *renewing influence of the Holy Spirit*.” And, “that there is an *abundant effusion of this spirit* under the *Gospel*,” which is therefore, with great

(a) James ii. 17.

propriety; called *the ministration of the Spirit*; (b), and *the laver of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus* (c) which is the washing of the word.

BUT I must necessarily, in pursuance of my general scheme, wave several of these remarks, that I may leave myself room to insist on the grand topic I intend from the words.

I HAVE already shewn you, who may be said to be in an *unregenerate state*: I have also described *the change* which regeneration makes in the soul: and have largely shewn you, in the *three last Discourses*, the absolute *necessity* and *importance* of it. And now I proceed,

FOURTHLY, To shew the *necessity* there is of the *agency* of the *Divine power*, in order to produce this great and important *change*.

THIS is strongly implied in the words of the *text*; in which the *Apostle*, speaking of the method *GOD* has been pleased to take for the display of his goodness in the salvation and happiness of fallen men, gives us this affecting view of it, that it is *not by works of righteousness which we, i. e. any of us Christians, have done, but according to his free grace and mercy that he has saved us by the washing, or (as might be rendered) the laver of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*.

I SHALL be ready to acknowledge, with the generality of *ancient and modern interpreters*, that *baptism* may probably here be called *the laver of regeneration*; *God* having appointed, that as *new-born children* are *washed*, so they, who by the influences of his grace on their hearts are *born again*, should, in token of their repentance for the sins of their past life, be *washed with baptismal*

(b) 2 Cor. iii. 8.

(c) Rom. viii. 2.

*water*; supposing (which was here apparently the case in this early age of *Christianity*); they had not received *that ordinance* in their infancy. Nevertheless, lest any should imagine, that an *external ceremony* was sufficient, or that it was the *chief thing* intended, the *Apostle* takes the matter higher. And as the apostle *Peter* tells us, that the *baptism* which saves us is not merely the putting away the filth of the flesh; but the answer of a good conscience towards *GOD* (d); so the apostle *Paul* here adds, that we are saved by the renewing of the *Holy Ghost*: by which I can by no means understand something entirely distinct from, and subsequent to, his regenerating influences; for according to the view of *regeneration* stated in our former discourses, none can be regenerated who are not renewed: but it seems to explain the former clause, and to refer to the more positive effect produced by *Divine grace* on the soul, whereby *Christians* are not only purified from *sin*, but disposed to, and quickened in, a course of *holy obedience*. And then further tells us, that *this Spirit* is the gift of *GOD*, and is plentifully communicated to us in the name, and through the hands of the blessed Redeemer, being shed on us abundantly by *GOD*, through *Jesus Christ* our Saviour.

AGREEABLY therefore to the general design and purport of *these words*, I shall go on to demonstrate the *absolute necessity* of a *Divine agency* and *operation* in this great work of our *regeneration*; which I shall do from a variety of topics. And here I shall studiously wave many *controversies*, with which the *Christian world* has been afflicted, and the soundest part of it disturbed, with

(d) 1 Pet. iii. 21.

relation to the *kind* and *manner* of *this influence*. I will not so much as mention them, and much less discuss them; lest Satan should take an advantage of us (e), to divert our minds from what is *essential* in *this doctrine*, to what is merely *circumstantial*. Only let it be observed in general, that I speak of “such an *agency of GOD* on our minds, as offers *no violence* to the rational and active nature which GOD has given us, nor does by any means *supersede* our obligation to those *duties* which his word requires; but on the contrary, *cures* and *perfects* our nature, and *disposes the soul* to a regard to such *incumbent duties*, and *strengthens it* in the discharge of them.” With this only *preliminary*, which appears to me highly important, I proceed to shew the *reasonableness* of ascribing *this change* to a *Divine Agency*, rather than to any thing else, which may be supposed to have any share in producing it. And we infer this,

[1.] “FROM the general and necessary *dependence* of the whole *created world* upon *GOD*.”

THERE was a *philosophical*, as well as *Divine truth*, in that observation of the apostle Paul at Athens, which was well worthy the most learned assembly; *In him, i. e. in GOD we live, and move, and have our being* (f). Such is the innate *weakness* of *created nature*, that it continually *depends* on a *Divine support*. The very idea of its being *created* supposes, that it had no cause of its existence, but the *Divine will*, in the first moment of it: and if it could not *then* subsist *without that will*, in the first moment of its existence, it neither could subsist *without it* in the second, or in

(e) 1 Cor. ii. 14.

(f) Acts xvii. 28.

any future moment of it: since to have been *dependent* for a while, can never be supposed to render any thing for the future *independent*. The continued *existence* then of all the creatures, no less of *angels*, than of *worms*, or *trees*, or *stones*, does properly *depend* upon the *Divine energy* which bears them up, and holds those of them *in life* which live, and those of them *in being*, which are inanimate, or without life.

AND if their *being* be *dependent*, then surely it will follow, that all their *perceptive* and *active powers*, whatsoever they are, must continually *depend upon GOD*: for *to exist with such powers* is evidently more than simply *to exist*; and if a *Divine agency* be necessary for the *latter*, much more must we allow it to be necessary for the *former*.

THE *human mind* therefore, with all its capacities and improvements, must acknowledge itself perpetually *indebted to GOD*, who is the fountain of *truth* and *wisdom*, as well as of *being*: accordingly we are told, it is *he that teacheth man knowledge* (g). All the *skill of the husbandman*, in one passage of *Scripture* (h), and all the *wisdom of the artificer*, in another (i), is ascribed to *his influence*: and if the improvement of the *sciences*, and any other *Discovery*, which renders human life in any degree more commodious and agreeable, is to be ascribed to the *Divine illumination* and influence; then surely it is from hence *this art of living wisely and well* must also be derived. All the views upon which good resolutions are formed, all the strong impressions upon the mind arising from these views, and all the steadiness and determination of spirit, which does not only form such purposes, but carries them into execution are plainly

(g) Psal. xciv. 1. (h) Isa. xxviii. 26. (i) Exod. xxxvi. 1, 2.

the effect of the *Divine agency* on the mind; without which no secular affairs could be clearly understood, strenuously pursued, or successfully accomplished. And how peculiarly reasonable it is, to apply this remark to the point now in view, will appear by attending;

[2.] To “the greatness and excellency of this change,” which speaks it aloud to be the *Divine work*.

I MUST, upon this occasion, desire you to recollect what I laid before you in several of the former *Discourses*. Think of the *new light* that breaks in upon the understanding—of the *new affections* that are enkindled in the heart—of the *new resolutions*, by which the will is sweetly and powerfully, though most freely influenced;—and think of the degree of vigour attending these resolutions, and introducing a series of *new labours* and *pursuits*;—and surely you must confess, that *it is the finger of GOD*; especially when you consider—how *beautiful and excellent*, as well as how *great* the work is.

Do we acknowledge, that it was the voice of *GOD* that first *commanded the light to shine out of darkness*, and that it was *worthy of a Divine agency* to produce so beautiful a creature as the *sun*, to gild the whole face of our world, and to dress the different objects around us in such a variegated and vivid assemblage of *colours*? And shall we not allow it to be *much more worthy* of him, to *lighten up a benighted soul*, and to reduce its *chaos* into harmony and order?—Was it *worthy of GOD* to form the *first principles* even of the *vegetative life*, in the lowest *plant* or *herb*, and to visit with the refreshing influences of the *rain* and *sun* the earth wherein *these seeds* are sown? And is it not *much more worthy* of him to implant  
the



the seed of the *Divine life*, and to nourish it from time to time by the influence of his *spirit*?—Did it suit the *Divine wisdom and mercy* to provide for sustaining our mortal *lives*, for healing our *wounds*, and recovering us from our *diseases*? And shall it not much more suit him, to act as the great *physician of souls*, in restoring them to ease, to health, and vigour?

THEY must be dead indeed to all sense of *spiritual excellency*, who do not see how much more illustriously *GOD* appears, when considered as the *author of grace*, than merely as the *author of nature*. For indeed all the works of *nature*, and all the instances of *Divine interposition* to maintain its order and harmony, will chiefly appear valuable and important, when considered in subserviency to the gracious design of recovering *apostate man* from the ruin of that *degenerate state*, without which it had been *far better for him* never to have known *being*, and never to have inhabited a *world* so liberally furnished with a variety of good. And, therefore, I would appeal to every *Christian*, whether he does not find a much more ardent *gratitude* glowing in his heart, when he considers *GOD* as the *author of the religious and divine*, than merely of the *animal or the rational life*.

AND permit me here to remark, that, agreeably to these reasonings, some of the *pagan philosophers* have said very serious and remarkable things concerning the *reality* and the *need of Divine influences* on the mind, for the production of virtue and piety there. Thus *Seneca*, when he is speaking of a resemblance to the Deity in character, ascribes it to the *influence of GOD* upon the mind: “Are you surprised,” says he, “that man should approach to the Gods? It is *GOD* that comes to men; nay, which is yet more, he *enters into* them;”

“them; for no mind becomes virtuous but by  
 “his assistance\*.” *Simplicius* also was so sen-  
 sible of the necessity of such an influence, that  
 he “prays to GOD, as the father and guide of rea-  
 “son, so to co-operate with us, as to purge us  
 “from all carnal and brutish affections, that we  
 “may be enabled to act according to the dictates  
 “of reason, and to attain to the true knowledge  
 “of himself †.” And *Maximus Tyrius* argues,  
 agreeably to what was said above, that “if skill in  
 “the professions and sciences is insinuated into  
 “men’s minds by a *Divine influence*, we can much  
 “less imagine, that a thing so much more ex-  
 “cellent, as *virtue* is, can be the work of any  
 “mortal art; for strange must be the notion that  
 “we have of GOD, to think that he is liberal and  
 “free in matters of less moment, and sparing in  
 “the greatest ‡.” And in the same discourse he  
 tells us, “that even the best disposed minds, as  
 “they are seated in the midst, between the highest  
 “virtue and extreme wickedness, need the assist-  
 “ance and the help of GOD, to incline and lead  
 “them to the better side ||.” — I am sensible that

\* *Miraris hominem ad Deos ire? Deus ad homines venit, imò, (quod proprius est,) in homines venit: nulla sine Deo mens bona est.* He had said but just before, *Ascendentibus manum porrigunt.* Senec. *Epistol.* LXXIII.

† *Καίρω σε, Δεσπότη, ὁ πατήρ καὶ ἡγεμὼν τῆ ἐν ἡμῖν λογῆ, — συμπραξάτω ὡς αὐτοκινῆσις ἡμῖν πρὸς τὴν καθάρσιν τὴν ἀπο τῆ σωματικῆς καὶ τῶν ἀλοῶν παθῶν, κτλ.* *Simplic.* in *Epictet.* ad fin.

‡ *Εἶτα ἐκεῖνα μὲν ἢ δὲ θεῖα τινὲ ἐπιπνοῖα ψυχῆς ἀνθρώπιναις ἀνακρί-  
 νασθαι, τὸ δὲ τῶν σπανιωτέρον τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐρῶν εἶναι τέχνης διήτης ἢ  
 πολλὰ ἀξίον νομιζέεις τὸ θεῖον, πρὸς μὲν τὰ φαυλά καλῶς καὶ ἀφθονῶς  
 παροσκευασμένον, πρὸς δὲ τὰ κρείττω ἀπορῶν.* *Max. Tyr. Dissert.*  
 XXI.

|| *Αἱ ἀρισταὶ ψυχῆς φύσεις, ἀμφισβητισμοὶ ἐν μείρει τῆς ἀκρᾶς ἀρετῆς,  
 πρὸς τὴν ἐσχάτην μοχθηρὰν καθωρμισμέναι, δεῖναι ζυγῶνισθαι θεῶν καὶ  
 ζυγῶνισθαι τῆς ἐπὶ θαλάττῃ τῆς κρείττω ῥοπῆς καὶ χειραλωσίας.* *Max. Tyr. ibid.*

all

all these *philosophers*, with many more who speak to the same purpose, living after *Christ's time*, may be said to have learned such language from *Christians*; and if they did so, I wish all who have since worn the name had been equally teachable; but some who appeared much *earlier*, speak much in the same manner\*, as I might easily shew you, if it were not already more than time to observe.

[3.] THAT we may further argue the *Divine agency* in this blessed work, “from the *violent opposition* over which it prevails in its *rise and progress*.”

THE awakened soul, when labouring towards GOD, and aspiring after further communications of his grace to form it for his service, may justly say with *David*, *Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? How many are they that rise up against me (1)?* With how many threatening dangers are we continually surrounded? and what a

\* It is here remarkable, that *Xenophon* represents *Cyrus*, with his dying breath, “as humbly ascribing it to a *Divine influence* on his mind, that he had been taught to acknowledge the care of Providence, and to bear his prosperity with a becoming moderation:” Πολλή δε υμιν χάρις, ὅτι καγὼ ἐγινώσκον τὴν ὑμέτεραν ἐπιμελείαν, καὶ ἔδε πωπολεῖ ἐπὶ ταῖς ἐντυχίαις, ὑπερ ἀνθρώπων ἐφραύνησα. *Xen. Cyropæd. lib. viii. cap. 7. §. 1.* And *Socrates* is introduced, by *Plato*, as declaring, “that wheresoever *virtue* comes, it is apparently the fruit of a *Divine dispensation* :” Θεῖα μοῖρα ἡμῖν φαίνεται παραγιγνομένη ἢ ἀγέλη, οἷς παραγιγνέσθαι. *Plat. Men. ad fin. p. 428.* And to this purpose *Plato* has observed, “that *virtue* is not to be taught but by *Divine assistance* :” Ἀλλ’ ἔδ’ ἀν’ διδάξειεν, εἰ μὴ Θεὸς ὑφηγοίτο. *Epinom. pag. 1014.* And elsewhere he declares, “that if any man escape the temptations of life, and behave himself as becomes a worthy member of society, as the laws of it are generally settled,” which, by the way, is something very far short of religion, “he has reason to own, that it is *GOD* that saves him:” Εὐ γὰρ χρεῖ εἶδναι, ὅτι περ ἀν’ σωθῆτε καὶ γενῆσαι εἶον· δεῖ, ἐν τοιαύτῃ κατὰσσει πολίτειων, Θεὸν μοῖραν αὐτοῦ σωσαι. *De Re-pub. lib. vi. pag. 677. edit. Francof. 1602.*

(1) *Psal. iii. 1.*

numerous host of *enemies* are ready to oppose us? *The law of sin that wars in our members* (m), and concerning whose forces it may well be said, *Their number is legion, for they are many* (n); the evil influence of a *degenerate world*, whose corrupt examples press like a torrent, and require the most vigorous efforts to bear up against them; and in confederacy with these, and at the head of all, *the Prince of darkness*, whose counsels and efforts, with relation to this world of ours, do, as it were, centre in this one thing, *to prevent men's regeneration*; because it is by means of *this*, that those are recovered out of the snare of the Devil, who were before led captive by him at his will (o).

I PERSUADE myself, that when I am speaking on this head, though some may imagine it to be mere empty *harangue*, and a common-place of *declamation*, the experienced soul will attest the *truth* of what I say. It may be some of you, who, by what of *these sermons* you have already heard, have come under some serious *convictions*, and been awakened in good earnest to be thoughtful about being *born again*, have felt such a struggle in your own minds, that you may say, you *never knew before* what the *flesh*, the *world*, and the *devil* were, nor could have imagined that *their opposition* to this *work* was so forcible and violent as you now find it.—To reform the irregularities of the *life* is comparatively easy; but to root sin out of the *soul*, to consecrate the whole *heart* to God, and demolish those *idols* that have been set up, as it were, in the secret *chambers of imagery* (p), is difficult indeed: all the *corruptions of the heart* in such a case are ready to exert themselves, and it

(m) Rom. vii. 23.

(n) Mark v. 9.

(o) 2 Tim. ii. 26.

(p) Ezek. viii. 12.

is natural for the *lusts of the flesh* to unite against *that* which is set upon destroying them all; nor did you ever know before, that there was such a world of *sin within you*.—With violence also does *the strong man armed* exert himself, when *his goods* are about to be *taken from him* by one *stronger than himself*; as *our Lord*, with an unerring propriety and wisdom, represents it (q): and indeed it seems as if through the violence of his malignity, and the righteous judgment of *GOD*, who, whenever he pleases, can *take the wise in his own craftiness* (r), that *Satan* sometimes overshoots his mark, and raises so sensible an opposition against the cause of *GOD* in the soul, that an argument might be drawn, even from that very opposition, to prove the truth and excellency of what he sets himself so directly against.—And you have now perhaps experienced too, more than you ever did before, the inveterate opposition of the *seed of the serpent* to that of the woman: you have found, that since you began to think of religion in good earnest, some have derided you, others it may be have reviled you, and enemies have sprung up out of your own house (s); though the impressions you have felt tend to make you more amiable, more kind, and more useful, and therefore one would think should conciliate their friendship: but this is a memorable instance in which *self-love* seems to make, as it were, a sacrifice of *itself* to the hatred of *GOD*.—Now, therefore, to accomplish such a mighty change in the midst of such opposition, must evidently speak a *Divine interposition*. And surely the *Christian*, when thus recovered and restored, has reason to declare, as *Israel* did, if it had not been the *LORD* who

(q) Luke xi. 21, 22.

(r) 1 Cor. iii. 19.

(s) Matt. x. 36.

was on our side when these confederate enemies rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul; then the proud waters had gone over our soul (t), and would have quenched and buried every spark that looked like *Divine life*, and have borne away every purpose of reformation and holiness. The remark will be further illustrated, if we consider,

[4.] “By what *feeble means* this *change* is accomplished.”

THE *Apostle* observes, that in his day *they had the treasure of the gospel lodged in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power, which rendered it successful, might appear to be of GOD, and not of man* (u). And it is still in a great measure apparent, that the *same method* is made use of, from the same principle. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal; and if at any time they are mighty and effectual, it must be only through GOD* (w). It is not by *secular might or power* (x), that this great work is accomplished: no, nor by the refinements of *learning*, or the charms of *elegance*. These things indeed have their use; the *understanding* may sometimes be convinced by the one, and the *affections* moved by the other: yet where both these have been done, *the work* often drops short: and it may be the plainest addresses from a weak and almost trembling tongue, shall perform *that* which the far superior talents of many have not been able to effect. A multitude of such instances have been found, and perhaps seldom in these latter ages more observable than in the compass of our own observation.

(t) Psal. cxxiv. 1—5. (u) 2 Cor. iv. 7. (w) 2 Cor. x. 4.  
(x) Zech. iv. 6.

Now whenever *this work* is accomplished by the preaching of the *gospel* in a *Christian* country, there is generally *some circumstance* that shews it is a *Divine*, and not a *human work*. It is not the *novelty* of the *doctrine* which strikes; for all the *main truths*, on which the conviction and impression turns, have been *known* even from *early infancy*. No *miracles* awaken the attention, no *new discoveries* astonish the mind; but what has a thousand times been heard, and as often neglected, breaks in upon the mind with an almost irresistible *energy*, and strikes it as if it never had been heard of before. They seem, as it were, *when the Lord turneth again their captivity*, to awaken out of a *dream* (y), and wonder at the accident that has awakened them. The *ministry of the word* may seem but *feeble*, when compared to such an event: and yet sometimes even less solemn methods than *that* shall be effectual. One single *text of Scripture* accidentally occurring to the sight or thought, one serious *hint* dropped in conversation, shall strike the mind, and pierce it through with an *energy* that plainly shews that from whatever *feeble hand* it might seem to come, it was shot out of the *quiver of GOD*, and intended by *him that made the heart* to reach it: since there is almost as much *disproportion* between the *cause* and the *effect*, as between *Moses lifting up his rod* and the *dividing* of the water of the sea before *Israel* (z). In many instances, *remarkable providences*, which one would have thought should have struck the soul as it were to the centre, have produced *no effect*; and yet a *word*, or a *thought*, has accomplished it: and after the *whirlwind*, the *earthquake*, and the *fire* have made their successive efforts *in vain*, it has appeared that *the Lord has*

(y) Psal. cxxvi. 1.

(z) Exod. xiv. 16.

been in the still small voice (a). On the whole, a variety of *circumstances* may illustrate the matter in different degrees; but, taking it in a *general view*, the remark appears to be well-founded; “that  
 “ the *weakness* of the *means* by which the *saving*  
 “ *change* is wrought, argues plainly that the *hand*  
 “ of *GOD* is in it;” as when *anointing the eyes*  
*with spittle* gave sight to the blind (b), it was evidently the exertion of a *miraculous power*.—  
 But now, agreeably to what has been advanced under these several *heads*, I shall proceed to shew at large,

[5.] “ THAT the *Scripture* teaches us to ascribe  
 “ *this great change* on the mind to a *Divine*  
 “ *agency* and *operation*.”

AND here you will see, that it does not merely drop here and there an *expression* which is capable of such an interpretation, but that the *whole tenor* of the *word of GOD* leads to such a conclusion; and surely, if we own *the word* to be *divine*, we need no more convincing argument of the *truth* of this remark. The only *difficulty* I shall here find, will be like that which occurred under the *former head*, and proceeds from the *variety* and multiplicity of *texts* which offer themselves to me while reflecting on this subject: however, I will endeavour to rank them in the plainest and best order I can, under the following *particulars*.—We find *GOD* sometimes *promises* to produce such a *change* in men’s minds;—and at other times he *speaks* of it as *his own work*, when it has been already produced:—the *Scripture* represents even the *increase of piety* in a *regenerate heart*, as the *effect* of a *Divine power*; and how much more must the *first implanting* of it be so?—nay, it goes yet further

(a) 1 Kings xix. 11, 12.

(b) John ix. 6.



than this; and expresses *the necessity* as well as the *reality*, of a *Divine influence* on the mind to make it truly religious, and resolves *the want of true religion* into this, that *GOD withholds his influence*.—If therefore *any one*, and much more if *all these particulars* can be made out, I think it must force a *conviction* on your *judgments* at least, that what we are endeavouring to confirm in *this discourse* is the *doctrine of Scripture*.

1. THERE are various places in *Scripture*, wherein “*GOD* promises to produce such a *change* in men’s minds as we have before *described*,” which plainly shews that it is to be acknowledged as *his work*.

Thus *Moses* says to *Israel*, without all doubt by the *Divine direction*, *The Lord thy GOD will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live* (c). And this *circumcision of the heart* must surely be the removal of some insensibility and pollution adhering to it, and bringing it to a more orderly, regular, obedient state: which, as it is sometimes made matter of *exhortation*, and thus indeed proves that there is a view in which it may be considered as a *duty* incumbent upon us, as when *Moses* said, *circumcise the fore-skin of your heart* (d); and *Jeremiah*, in imitation of him, *circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the fore-skin of your heart* (e); so here it is put in the form of a *promise*, to signify that wherever it was done, it was in consequence of *GOD’s* preventing and assisting *grace*,—on the same principle, *the Father* promises to *Christ*, *thy people shall be willing in the*

(c) Deut. xxx. 6.

(d) Deut. x. 16.

(e) Jer. iv. 4.

day of thy power (f): and if any pretend that these words may possibly admit of another version, though I know none more just than this, there are many other parallel places which are not attended with any ambiguity at all.—Such, in particular, is that gracious promise (which, though it was immediately made to the house of Israel, is nevertheless quoted by the Apostles as expressive of God's gospel covenant with all believers;) *After those days saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their GOD, and they shall be my people (g):* or, as it is elsewhere expressed by the same prophet *Jeremiah, I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever; and I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me (h).*—And *Ezekiel* echoes back the same language by the same spirit; *I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them (i);* which is afterwards repeated again almost in the same words; *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them (k).*—Now such a transformation of the heart and spirit as may be represented by a thorough renovation, or by changing stone into flesh, speaks the doctrine I am asserting in as plain terms as we could

(f) Psal. cx. 3. (g) Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10. (h) Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. (i) Ezek. xi. 19, 20. (k) Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

contrive or express, and beautifully points out at once the *greatness and excellency of the change*; and the *Almighty Power* by which it is effected; for we may assure ourselves *GOD* would never promise such *influences*, if he did not really mean to impart them. But again,

2. AGREEABLY to the tenor of these promises, the "*Scripture* also ascribes *this work* to a "*Divine agency*, when it is effected."

Thus the apostle *John*, when he is speaking of those who, on receiving *Christ*, become the sons of *GOD*, declares concerning them that *they were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD* (l); plainly intimating that it was *to him*, and not only or chiefly to themselves or others, that this happy change was to be ascribed; which is well explained by those words of *St. James*, in which he says, *of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures* (m). Accordingly our *Lord*, as you have heard at large, insists upon it as absolutely necessary to a man's entering into the kingdom of *GOD*, not only that he should be born again, but more particularly that he should be born of the spirit (n), i. e. by the sanctifying influence of the spirit of *GOD* operating upon his soul, to purify and cleanse it.—And as this great work of regeneration chiefly consists in being brought to *faith* and *repentance*, you may observe, that each of these are spoken of as a *Divine production* in the mind, or as the *gift of GOD* to it. Thus the believing *Jews*, with one consent, expressed their conviction when they heard the story of *Cornelius*, and declare, *then has GOD also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life* (o).

(l) *John* i. 13.

(m) *Jam.* 1. 18.

(n) *John* iii. 3, 5.

(o) *Acts* xi. 18.

And so the Apostle *Paul* expresses it; when speaking of the possibility that some might be recovered out of the snare of the Devil, he says, *If GOD peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth* (p). That very attention to the gospel, which is the first step towards the production of faith in the soul, is resolved into this, when it is said, that *the Lord opened Lydia's heart, that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul* (q). And with regard to the progress of it, it is not only said in general; *you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins*; but *faith* expressly declared to be *the gift of GOD* (r); and the apostle says to the *Philippians*, that it was *given to them to believe* (s); nay, it is represented as a most glorious and illustrious effort of *Divine power*, and ascribed to *the exceeding greatness of his power towards them that believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead* (t).—And in this view it is, that *this change* is called *a new creation* (u); plainly implying, as a celebrated writer well expresses it, “that something must here be done in us, and for us, which cannot be done by us.” Wherefore it is said, that *the new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him* (w); and *we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works* (x): not to insist upon the great variety of parallel passages in which the same thoughts are expressed almost in the very same words. But he indeed who would reckon up all the Scriptures, both in the *Old and New Testament*, which directly or indirectly refer to this,

(p) 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26. (q) Acts xvi. 14. (r) Ephes. ii. 1. &  
 (s) Phil. i. 29. (t) Eph. i. 19, 20. (u) 2 Cor. v. 17. (w) Col.  
 iii. 10. (x) Eph. ii. 10.

must transcribe a larger part of both than would be convenient to read at one time in a worshipping assembly.—But we may further, by a very strong consequence, infer the doctrine I am now maintaining from those various passages of the *sacred writers*, in which,

3. “THE *increase of piety* in an heart already  
“*regenerated*, is spoken of as the *work of*  
“*GOD.*”

THUS *David*, even when he felt himself disposed to the most vigorous prosecution of *religion*, solemnly declares his dependance upon continued *Divine influences*, to enable him to execute the holy purpose he was then most affectionately forming: *I will run the way of thy commandments, as he, when thou shalt enlarge my heart (y), when thou shalt influence it with a steady principle of zeal, and with those devout passions which make every branch of my duty easy and delightful.*—And the apostle *Paul* declares his persuasion that *GOD* would continue those gracious influences which he had already imparted: *He that has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (z).* And when he speaks of the ardent *desire* with which *Christians* were aspiring towards a better world, he adds, *He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is GOD (a).* Thus also he ascribes his continued *fidelity* in the *ministry* to the *grace of GOD* that was with him, as being *one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful (b)*: and *by the grace of GOD*, says he, *I am what I am*; and if *I have laboured more abundantly than others*, it is not *I*, but the *grace of GOD* which was with me (c):

(y) Psal. cxix. 32.      (z) Phil. i. 6.      (a) 2 Cor. v. 5.  
(b) 1 Cor. vii. 25.      (c) 1 Cor. xv. 10.

on the same principle he acknowledges, that the success of *Apollos* in watering, as well as his own in planting, was to be referred to this, that *GOD* gave the increase in the one case as well as the other (d). And he concludes his *epistle* to the *Hebrews* with this remarkable prayer; *The GOD of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ* (e).

—But indeed, as every prayer that the *Apostles* offer for any of their *Christian* brethren and friends, that they may grow in grace, might be urged for the illustration of *this head*, I choose rather to refer the rest to your own observation on this general hint, than to enter into a more particular enumeration. I shall only add, to complete the argument,

4. THAT the *Scripture* often declares “ the  
 “ necessity as well as the reality of such in-  
 “ fluences, and refers the ruin of man to this  
 “ circumstance, that *GOD* in his righteous  
 “ judgment had *with-held* or *with-drawn*  
 “ them.”

WHEN *Moses* would upbraid the obstinacy of the *Israelites*, that all the profusion of wonders wrought for them in *Egypt* and in the *wilderness* had not produced any suitable impressions; so much was he accustomed to think of every thing good, in the moral, as well as in the natural world, as the gift of *GOD*, that he uses this remarkable expression: *Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day* (f).

—And our *Lord*, the propriety of whose expressions surely none can arraign, speaks to the same purpose, when adoring the Divine conduct with respect to the dispensation of saving light and gospel

(d) 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. (e) Heb. xiii. 21. (f) Deut. xxix. 4.

blessings.

blessings, he says, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight* (g). If some of the plainest and lowest of the people, who were in comparison to others but as little children, understood and received the Gospel, while the learned men and politicians of the age despised it, GOD revealed it to the former, while he suffered the veil of prejudice to remain on the mind of the latter, though his Almighty hand could easily have removed it.—Those other words of our Lord must not be omitted here, in which he says, *No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him* (h): and what this drawing of the Father means, he himself has explained by saying, *No man can come unto me, except it be given him of my Father* (i); and elsewhere he expresses it by *learning of the Father* (k); all which must undoubtedly signify a Divine agency and influence on the mind.—Nay, a more forcible expression than this is made use of by the Evangelist, where he takes notice of the unbelief of those that saw the miracles of Christ, *therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said, he has blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts* (l): which is agreeable to that expression of the apostle Paul, *he has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he hardeneth* (m): a thought which the Apostle pursues at large through the following verses.

THESE, to be sure, are very emphatical Scriptures: and though it is necessary to understand them in such a qualified sense as to make them

(g) Mat. xi. 25, 26. (h) John vi. 44. (i) Ver. 65. (k) Ver. 45. (l) John xii. 39, 40. (m) Rom. ix. 18.

consistent with *other Scriptures*, which charge *men's destruction*, not on any *necessitating decree* of *GOD*, but upon *themselves*, and the abuse of their own faculties; yet still these expressions must stand for something; and in the most *moderate sense* that can be put upon them, they directly confirm what I have here brought them to prove. So that on the whole, the matter must come to this, “That the cause of *men's* final and everlasting *ruin* may be referred, in one view of it, to *GOD's* *with-holding* those gracious *influences*, which if they had been imparted, would indeed have subdued the greatest perverseness: but his *with-holding these influences* is not merely an arbitrary act, but the *just punishment* of *men's* wickedness, and of their obstinate folly in trifling with the means of his grace, and *grieving his Spirit* till it was provoked to *withdraw*.” This thought, which I might largely prove to you to be a *compendium* of the *Scripture-scheme*, reconciles all; and any consequences drawn from *one part* of that *scheme* to the denial of the *other*, how plausible soever, must certainly be false.

I HOPE what I have here said may be sufficient to fix a *conviction* in your judgments and consciences, “that *regeneration* is ultimately to be referred to a *Divine influence* upon the soul;” or as the *Apostle* expresses it in the *text*, that *GOD* saves us of his mercy, by the *washing of regeneration*, and *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, which he shed on us abundantly through *Jesus Christ our Saviour*.

I SHALL conclude with two or three *reflections*, which though so exceeding *obvious*, I shall touch upon, in regard to their great *importance*, without offering, as I might, to dilate on each of them at large.

[1.] LET



[1.] LET those who have experienced this *Divine change* in their souls give *GOD* the *glory* of it.

PERHAPS there are many of you who may see peculiar reason to do it; perhaps you may be conscious to yourselves, that *the arm of the Lord* was remarkably *revealed* in conquering every sensible *opposition*, and getting itself the *victory*, even when you seemed as if you had been resolutely bent upon your own destruction, to *struggle* to the utmost against the *operation of his grace* on your soul. Others may perhaps have perceived the *strength* of the *Divine agency* in the *slightness* of the *occasion*, or in the *weakness* of the *means* by which he wrought; which indeed is often matters of astonishment to those that seriously reflect upon it. But whatever *your inclinations* may have appeared, and whatever *means* or *instruments* were used, give *GOD* the *glory* of all.

If you have found yourselves, from your early years, *inclined to attend* to divine things, and susceptible of tender *impressions* from them, that *attention* and those *impressions* were to be resolved into *this*, that *GOD* presented you with the blessings of his goodness. If you have enjoyed the most excellent *public ordinances*, even with all the concurrent *advantages* that the most pressing *exhortations*, and the most edifying *example* of parents, ministers, and companions could give, it was *Divine providence* that furnished you with those *advantages*, and *Divine grace* that added *efficacy* to them, else they had only served to display their own *weakness*, even where they might have appeared *most powerful*, and to illustrate that *insensibility* or *obstinacy of heart* which would have rendered you *proof* against all. You do well indeed to *honour* those whom *GOD* has blessed as *the means* of your spiritual

edification: but if they think aright, it would *grieve them* to the very heart to have those applauses given, and those acknowledgments made *to them* which are due *to GOD alone*. All *they* have done is so *little* that it deserves not the mention; and the greater attainments they have made in religion, the more cordially will they join with the holy *Apostle* in saying, *Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but GOD that giveth the increase* (n).

[2.] WE may further infer, that they who attempt the *conversion of sinners*, should do it with an humble *dependance* on the co-operation of *Divine grace*.

OTHERWISE they will probably find themselves fatally disappointed; and after their most skilful or most laborious attempts, they will complain that *they have laboured in vain, and spent their strength for nought* (o); and find reason to say, *The bellows are burnt, and the lead is consumed of the fire, yet the dross is not taken away* (p). A dependance upon *GOD*, in all the *common affairs of life*, becomes us, as we are *creatures*; and it is most necessary that we should, *in all our ways, acknowledge him*, as we expect or desire that *he should direct or prosper our paths* (q): but the greater the undertaking is, the more solemn should the *acknowledgment of GOD* be.

LET me therefore especially recommend this to those who are coming forth as young *officers* in the army of *Christ*. See to it, my brethren, that *in the name of your GOD you set up your banners* (r); that you apply from time to time to your public work with a deep *conviction* upon your

(n) 1 Cor. iii. 7.

(o) Isa. xlix. 4.

(p) Jer. vi. 28.

(q) Prov. iii. 6.

(r) Psal. xx. 5.

minds, that no strength of reason will effectually convince; that no eloquence will effectually persuade, unless *he that made men's hearts* will plead his own cause, and bow those hearts in humble subjection. . . With these views I have often known *the feeblest attempts* successful, and the meek and lowly have, *out of weakness, been made strong* (s); while, for want of this, all the charms of composition and delivery have been, at best, but like *the lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice*, or the art of one *that can play well on an instrument* (t). It is *those that honour GOD* by the most cordial dependance upon him that *he delights to honour* (u): and I will presume to say, that it is the *inward conviction* of this important truth, which I feel upon my soul while I am confirming it in you, that encourages me to hope, that *this labour shall not be in vain in the Lord* (w), but that a *Divine blessing* shall evidently attend what has already been delivered, and what shall further be spoken. Only let me conclude my present Discourse with this one necessary caution,

[3.] THAT you do not *abuse* this doctrine of the *necessity of Divine influences*, which, from the *word of GOD*, has been so abundantly confirmed.

*GOD* does indeed *act upon us*, in order to produce this happy *change*; but he *acts upon us* in a manner suitable to our rational nature, and not as if we were *mere machines*. He *saves us*, as the Scripture expresses it, by *awaking us to save ourselves* (x); *a new heart does he give us, and a new spirit does he put within us* (y), to stir us up to be *solicitous to make ourselves a new heart and a new spirit* (z): *he circumcises our heart to love*

(s) Heb. xi. 34.

(t) Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

(u) 1 Sam. ii. 32.

(w) 1 Cor. xv. 58.

(x) Acts ii. 40.

(y) Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

(z) Ezek. xviii. 31.

him (a), by engaging us to take away the fore-  
 dominion of our hearts (b). You see the correspond-  
 ency of the phrases; and it is of great importance  
 that you attend to it.—If any therefore say, “I will  
 sit still, and attempt nothing for my own reco-  
 very, till GOD irresistibly compels me to it;”  
 he seems as like to perish, as that man would be,  
 who, seeing the house in flames about him, should  
 not attempt to make his escape, till he felt himself  
 moved by a miracle. Sirs, the dependance of the  
 creature on GOD, though it be especially, yet it  
 is not only, in spiritual affairs: it runs through  
 all our interests and concerns. We as really depend  
 upon his influence to stretch out our hands, as we  
 do to raise our hearts toward him in prayer.  
 Your fields could no more produce their fruit with-  
 out his agency, than his word could, without it,  
 become fruitful in your hearts: yet you plow and  
 sow; and would look upon him as a madman, that  
 upon this principle should decline it, urging, that no  
 crop could be expected if GOD did not produce it;  
 and that if he pleased to produce it, it would come  
 up without any human labour. The argument is  
 just the same in that case, as when men plead for  
 the neglect of means or endeavours, from the reality  
 and necessity of a Divine concurrence. And if  
 they apply this argument to the concerns of their  
 souls, when they do not apply it to those of their  
 bodies, it plainly shews, that they regard their bodies  
 more than their souls; and that, in pretending to  
 make these excuses, they belie<sup>e</sup> their conscience, and  
 act against the secret conviction of their own heart.  
 Such persons do not deserve to be disputed with,  
 but rather should be solemnly admonished of the  
 danger of such egregious trifling, where eternity is

(a) Deut. xxx. 6.

(b) Jer. ix. 4.

at stake. And sure I am, that it is offering a great affront to the memory of the blessed *Paul*, when men pretend to encourage themselves in this perverse temper from any thing he has said. For when he gives us, as it were, the substance of all I have now been saying in those comprehensive words; *It is GOD that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure* (c); he is so far from mentioning it as any excuse for *remissness* and *sloth*, that he introduces it professedly in the very contrary view, as engaging us to exert ourselves with the utmost vigour in a *dependance* upon that *Divine operation*. And therefore, as he there expresses it, I say with him, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*; and if you will not do it, you have reason to *tremble* in the prospect of a final *condemnation* from *GOD*, aggravated by your having thus irrationally and ungratefully *abused* the revelation of *his grace*.

(c) Phil. ii. 13.

## SERMON VIII.

Of the VARIOUS METHODS of the DIVINE  
OPERATION in the Production of this  
Saving Change.

I COR. XII. 6.

— *There are diversities of operations, but it is  
the same GOD, which worketh all in all.*

WHATEVER the original sense of these words was, and how peculiarly soever they may relate to *the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit*, the whole tenor of the Discourse now intended will shew, with how much propriety they may, at least, be accommodated to *the operations of his grace*. I have proved to you in the last of these Lectures, that wherever *regeneration* is produced, it is ultimately to be ascribed to a *Divine agency*; and though I cannot say it is equally important, yet I apprehend it may be both agreeable and useful to proceed,

FIFTHLY. To survey the *variety* of those methods, which GOD is pleased to take in producing this happy change: or, to borrow the language of the text, to consider the *diversity of operations*, by which *the same GOD, who worketh all in all*, (i. e. who produces all the virtues and graces of the Christian character, in some degree, in all his people)

people) is pleased, according to his own wise and gracious purposes, to proceed *in his agency* on those whom he regenerates and saves.

AND this *survey* will not be matter of mere *curiosity*, but may probably *revive the hearts* of some amongst you by the recollection of your own experience: and it may be a *caution* to others, who, for want of due compass and extent of thought and knowledge, are ready to argue, as if *GOD* had but *one way* to work on the human heart, and *that one* the particular manner by which he recovered *them*. Of this I shall speak more largely hereafter. In the mean time, I judged it necessary to premise *this hint*, to direct us as to the *temper* with which this Discourse should be heard; as well as to the *purpose* to which it is to be improved.

Now what I have to offer on this subject will be ranged under these *three heads*. There is a *diversity* and *variety* observable—in the *time*—the *occasion*—and the *manner*, of the *Divine operations* on the soul.

I. THERE is an observable *variety*, “as to the  
“*time* of *GOD*’s gracious *operations* on dif-  
“ferent persons.”

SOME are called in their *infancy*:—others, and these perhaps *the greatest part*, are wrought upon in *youth*:—and some *very few* in the *advance*, and even in the *decline* of life.

1. SOME are wrought upon by *Divine grace* “in  
“their *infancy*.”

THIS is often the case; and I doubt not, but if *parents* were to do their duty, it would much more frequently be so. And it is an honour which *GOD* is pleased, in some instances, remarkably to confer on a *good education*; which is indeed so important a *duty* on one side, and so great a *privilege* on the other, that it is the less to be

wondered at, that he so mercifully encourages *Christian parents* in the discharge of it; thus granting, as it were, an immediate *reward* for this *labour of love*. And I must here take the freedom, on my own observation, to say, that God seems especially to own the faithful endeavours of *pious mothers* in this respect. He has wisely and graciously given *that sex* a peculiar tenderness of address, and an easy and insinuating manner, which is admirably adapted to this great *end*, for which, no doubt, he especially intended it, that of conveying knowledge to *children*, and making tender impressions on their minds: and there is hardly any view in which the *importance* of the *sex* more evidently appears.

We have encouragement to believe, there are a considerable number who are, as it were, *santified from the womb*, and in whom the *seeds of Divine grace* are sown, before they grow up to a *capacity* of understanding the public *preaching* of the word: a remark, which *Mr. Baxter* carries so far as to say, “that he believes, if the duties of  
 “*religious education* were conscientiously dis-  
 “charged, *preaching* would not be *God’s* ordi-  
 “nary method of converting souls; but the greater  
 “part would be wrought upon before they were  
 “*capable* of entering into the design of a *sermon*.”

And indeed it seems to me, that *children* may early come to have some *apprehensions* of what is *most important* in religion. They may have a *reverence* for *God*; and a *love* for him, as that great *Father* who made them, and that kind *Friend* who gives them every thing that they have: they may have a *fear* of doing any thing that would displease him: and though it is not so easy for them to understand the *doctrines* peculiar to a *Redeemer*; yet when they hear of *Christ* as the *Son of God*, who came down from *Heaven* to teach *men* and  
 children



*children* the way *thither*; who *loved* them, and *did* them good every day, and at last *died* to deliver them from *death* and *hell*; their little hearts may well be impressed with such thoughts as these, and they may find a growing desire *to be instructed* in what *Christ* is, and what he taught and did, and *to do* what shall appear to be *his will*. And wherever this is the prevailing disposition, it seems to me that the *seeds of holiness* are sown in that soul, though but small proficiency may be made in *knowledge*, and though the capacities for *service* may be very low.

I WILL add, that some remarkably pertinent and solid things, which *little children* have said concerning *religion*, seem to me plainly to evidence, that they have been, in many instances, under some uncommon *teachings* of the *Divine spirit*: and it seems perfectly suitable to the genius of *Christianity*, that in this sense *GOD* should *ordain strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings* (a), and should *reveal* to them *what he has* suffered to be *hidden from the wise and prudent* (b). Nor can I suppose it hard for any, who have been for a considerable time acquainted with the state of religion in *Christian societies*, to recollect various instances, in which persons thus early *taught of GOD*, who have heard, and known, and loved the *Scriptures*, and delighted in *ordinances* and *serious discourse* from their *childhood*, have been, in some measure, like *Samuel, Obadiah, Jeremiah, Josiah, and Timothy*, honoured with eminent usefulness in the church, and have happily filled some of its most important stations of service. Almost every age has afforded instances of this; and I am persuaded,

(a) Psal. viii. 2.

(b) Mat. xi. 25.

many are now growing up amongst us, who will be instances of it in ages yet to come.

2. OTHERS, and these perhaps the greatest part of real Christians, are wrought upon "in their youthful days."

MANY parents are very deficient in a due care to cultivate the infant minds of their *little ones*; or the feeble and general impressions then made, are, perhaps, worn out and lost, in the growing vanities of *childhood and youth*. They begin to be drawn away by evil inclinations and examples, and by the delusions of a flattering *world*, which then puts on its most attractive charms, to gain upon their unexperienced minds: and hereupon they *follow after vanity, and become vain (c)*: of the rock which begat them, they grow *unmindful, and forget the GOD that formed them (d)*. But by one method or another, GOD often stops them in this dangerous career; and awakening ordinances, or more awakening providences, bring them to a stand, and turn them the contrary way. The terrors of the Lord set themselves in array against them (e); or his mercy melts their souls, and they yield themselves its *willing captives*. They consecrate their hearts, warm as they are with youthful vigour, to be the sacrifices of Divine love, and enter; it may be, very early into the bonds of GOD's covenant; and so prove such a seed to serve him, as is accounted to the Lord for a most honourable and useful generation (f). Blessed be GOD, I speak to many who know this by experience! By far the greater part of those who have been admitted to your communion, since I settled among you, have been, as I apprehend, under the age of *twenty-four years*: and several of those, who were far-

(c) 2 Kings xvii. 15.

(d) Deut. xxxii. 18.

(e) Job vi. 4.

(f) Psal. xxii. 30.

ther advanced in life when they first approached the table of the Lord, had been brought to real religion in their much earlier years; though particular circumstances, or some mistaken apprehensions, might prevent their giving up their names publicly to the Lord, so soon as they might, and as they ought to have done it.

3. SOME few are wrought upon by Divine grace “in the advance, and even in the decline of life.”

I CONFESS that the number of these is comparatively small: and it is not to be wondered at, that it is so. They are not many who arrive to what can properly be called old age; and of them but a very inconsiderable part are then brought to any thing which looks like a saving change. Nor shall we be much surprized at this, if we consider the inveterate nature of bad habits, which render it almost as hard for them that are accustomed to do evil, to learn to do good, as it is for the Ethiopian to change his skin, or the Leopard his spots (g). To such a degree are prejudices rivetted in the mind, so <sup>in</sup>sensible is it rendered of tender and generous impressions, so cold are the affections, and the memory (if the phrase may be allowed,) so rigid, that humanly speaking, there is much less probability of their being impressed with religion, than there was when they were in the bloom of life; notwithstanding all the seeming advantages which might arise from riper reason, deeper experience, and a nearer prospect of eternity. In all these things, it is in vain to reason against observation of fact, since we evidently see how uncommon a thing it is, for persons to be awakened and reformed in old age; especially if they have

(g) Jer. xiii. 23.

been *educated* in the principles of *religion*, and have made a florid *profession* of it in their *youth*, from which they have afterwards *apostatized*, out of a love to the wealth or honours of the world, or a relish for sensual delights. Such persons generally live and die *monuments of Divine wrath*, bearing as it were, in characters dreadfully legible, the sad inscription of those, “who having *forsaken GOD*, “are finally *forsaken of him*.” They appear as *dry trees, twice dead*, and fit for nothing but to be *plucked up by the roots, and cast into the fire* (h).

NEVERTHELESS, to prove the infinite energy and sovereignty of *Divine grace*, *GOD* is sometimes pleased to work even on such. He touches *the rock* which has stood for ages unmoved, and *the waters* flow forth: he says to *the dry bones, live*, and they obey; they are clothed with *beauty*, they are animated with *life*, and *stand up* as with the vigour of a *renewed youth*, to pursue the *labours of religion*, and to fight the *battles of the Lord* (i).  
 OF Such instances, (in which *aged sinners* have been thus wrought upon,) I have read and heard; though (I grieve to say it,) I can recollect *very few*, if *any*, that have occurred to me within the sphere of my own personal observation and acquaintance.

BUT besides this *variety* in the *time*, there is also,

II. AN observable *diversity*, “in the *occasion*,  
 “which *Divine grace* takes to *operate* upon  
 “different persons.”

THE *occasions* are indeed so *various*, that it would be impossible to enumerate them: I shall however just touch on some of the *chief*.

AND here I might particularly consider a *religious education* in this view, and that daily *converse*

(h) Jude, ver. 12. John xv. 6.

(i) Ezek, xxxvii. 10.

with.

with pious friends, which is of course connected with it. But though perhaps there may be no occasion more considerable in itself, and none that has been more eminently honoured of GOD; yet it is proper to wave it here, as having been mentioned under the former head, as well as much more largely illustrated in my sermons on that subject, which are in most of your houses, and which, I hope, you will often review.

I PROCEED therefore farther to observe,——that some are wrought upon by the word of GOD;—others by some remarkable providences;—some by little incidents, which, inconsiderable as they seem in themselves, grow memorable by the noble effects they are made to produce;—and others by secret and immediate impressions of GOD upon their spirits, which cannot be resolved into any external cause, or any visible occasion at all.

I. “THE administration of *Divine ordinances*; “and especially *the word of GOD* and “*prayer*,” is an occasion, which he most frequently takes, to work upon men’s hearts by his grace.

I do not mention the administration of the sacraments upon this occasion; because, though they have so noble and effectual a tendency to improve men’s minds in piety, and to promote *Christian edification*; yet I do not remember to have heard of any instance, in which they have been the means of men’s conversion; which is the less to be wondered at, as they are appointed for a very different end.

THERE are many, however, that have been wrought upon in prayer, as there are many things concur in this to awaken and impress the mind. The solemn acknowledgements then made of the Divine perfections, the praises offered to his tremendous Majesty, the deep and humble confession  
of

of our various and aggravated guilt in his holy presence, the *lamentations* over it, the importunate *pleadings* for a variety of blessings, both for time and eternity; in a word, all the overflowings of *pious affections* in the breast of him that leads the devotion, and especially the *earnest intreaties* then offered for unconverted sinners, the genuine *expressions* of an undissembled apprehension of their danger, and the fervent *breathings* after Divine grace, to be communicated to them for their spiritual life: all these things, I say, and many more, which occur in *prayer*, when it is managed aright, may, by the Divine blessing, be singularly useful. And I am well assured, there have been happy instances, in which, *while* God's people *have yet been speaking* to him on this head, he has graciously *heard*, and signally *answered them* (k).

BUT the *reading*, and especially the *preaching* of *the word*, is the grand occasion and instrument in the conversion of souls. *Of his own will he begets them with the word of truth* (l): and it is admirably suited to those *saving impressions* which it is intended to make on the heart, *being quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword* (m). It was *while* Paul was *preaching*, that *the Lord opened Lydia's heart*, so that she *attended to the things which were spoken by him* (n): and it was *while* Peter was thus employed, that such vast multitudes were *pricked in their hearts*, and said to him, and to the rest of *the apostles present, Men and brethren, what shall we do* (o)? And I am well persuaded, that, various and lamentable as the instances are, in which men *stop their ears*, and *harden their hearts* against it,

(k) Isa. lxxv. 24.

(l) Jam. i. 18.

(m) Heb. iv. 12.

(n) Acts xvi. 14.

(o) Acts ii. 37.

GOD

GOD does not even to this day leave it without witness; but the terrors of the Lord, as displayed by his faithful ministers, have subdued their thousands, and the riches of his grace their ten thousands, when illustrated by those who have not only heard, but have themselves tasted of their sweetness. The preaching of the cross may indeed to them that perish be foolishness; but blessed be his name who died upon it, there is still a happy remnant, to whom it appears to be the power of GOD, and the wisdom of GOD (p). Evangelical subjects, when opened with perspicuity, and enforced with vigour, and tenderness, by those that have experienced the transforming energy of them on their own hearts, and desire, above all things, to be wise to win the souls of others (q), are generally the occasion of producing the most immediate, and the most important change; as I doubt not, but many now present have seen and felt. And the observation of every year of life convinces me more and more, that they who desire to be signally instrumental in this good work, this work, of all others; the most benevolent and important, must, in the account of a vain world, become fools, that they may be wise (r). How contemptuously soever it may be fashionable to treat such preaching, we must make these subjects familiar to our hearers, and must treat them with all plainness of speech, and all seriousness of address, or we shall generally labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought (s). Would to GOD, that the teachers of our Israel may consider the importance of it, and grow wise by such experiments as these! that they may act the part of prudent physicians, who pre-

(p) 1 Cor. i. 18, 24.

(q) Prov. xi. 30.

(r) 1 Cor. iii. 18.

(s) Isa. xlix. 4.

scribe the *medicines* they find in fact most useful, and those concerning which the finest speculations may be framed. Till then, whatever their *learn-<sup>ing</sup>*, *politeness*, and *parade* may be, it cannot be expected that our *health* should be generally recovered; but we are like to continue, what we have long been, a *vicious people*, amidst the finest *encomiums of virtue*, that are any where to be found: nor will there be much room to wonder, if some of its most eloquent *advocates* should appear, even in their own *practice*, insensible of those charms which they so gracefully recommend to others, and sink in their character below those *heathen moralists*, whom they may chuse to imitate, rather than *Christ* and his *apostles*. Nevertheless I am persuaded, that if *GOD* intend mercy for us as a people, he will support among us a succession of those who shall dispense his *ordinances* in such a *manner*, as he has generally chosen to honour with success. But though the greater part of *sincere converts* are reduced by these, I am to add,

2. THAT “remarkable *providences*, whether “*merciful* or *afflictive*,” are *occasions* which *GOD* takes to work upon the hearts of many others.

WHEN *ordinances* have long been attended in *vain*, *GOD* perhaps interposes, by other more peculiar and signal methods, to *pluck* the trifling and lethargic sinner *as a fire-brand out of the burning* (t).

SOMETIMES remarkable *mercies* and *deliverances* accomplish the work. An appearance of *GOD* in their favour, when they are conscious to themselves that they are the unworthiest of all his

(t) Amos iv. 11.



creatures, shall shame, and melt them, and powerfully prevail on their minds to *turn unto the Lord*; who *daily loads them with his benefits* (u), and thus seems, in more senses than one, to *send from Heaven* to save them, and to *draw them out of many waters*, in which they had otherwise been lost (w).

BUT we more frequently see, that *afflictions* are the *means* of performing this happy work. By a *gracious severity* God is pleased to *lay hold* on many, and to give them reason to bless the hand, which, though by a rough motion, delivers them from the flames that were kindling around them, and shews *the Lord* to be *merciful to them* (x). Like *Jonah* in the ship, they are awakened by a *storm*, to *call upon their GOD* (y): like *Manasseh*, they are *taken among the thorns*, and *laid in fetters*, that they may be brought to *know the Lord* (z); like the *jailor*, they are shaken with an *earthquake*, and *trembling and astonished* they *fall down*, and enquire *what they shall do to be saved* (a)? The terrifying fear of the approach of *death*, or the distressing weight of some *calamity*, which threatens every moment to swallow them up in destruction, rouses their consciences to an attention to those divine truths which they had long forgotten, and opens those records of guilt which they had studiously sealed up.

AND there seems to be no *affliction* by which God more frequently works upon men than by *sickness*. When he weakens their capacity for the business of life, and spoils their relish for its enjoyments; when he confines them to their cham-

(u) Psal. lxxlii. 19. (w) Psal. xviii. 16. (x) Gen. xix. 16. (y) Jonah i. 6. (z) 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, 13. (a) Acts xvi. 26—30.

bers, or even to their beds, and *makes their chain strait and heavy* (b); when he threatens to *take them away in the midst of their days* (c), to *deprive them of the residue of their years* (d), and immediately to bring them before that awful tribunal, for which they know, in their own consciences, they are so ill prepared: then do we often see the accomplishment of that observation which *Elihu* made so many ages ago; *He chasteneth a man with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain, so that his life abhorreth breail, and his soul dainty meat; his flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones, that were not seen, stick out; yea, his soul draweth near to the grave, and his life to the destroyers: but sending him an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious to him, and saith, in a spiritual as well as a literal sense, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom* (e).—Blessed be GOD, instances of this kind have been known, and known among us, in which the *sickness of the body* has wrought the *cure of the soul*, under the conduct of the great Physician of both; and so has proved eminently to the glory of GOD, and the good of those who, *for a while, have been in heaviness* (f).

YET it must be acknowledged, that, in other instances, the *remorse* which a man expresses upon a *sick bed*, and in the near views of *eternity*, proves but like *that* of some *condemned malefactor*, who, when he has obtained a pardon, throws off all those appearances of repentance with which he had once deceived himself, and perhaps deceived

(b) Lam. iii. 7.

(c) Psal. cii. 24.

(d) Isa. xxviii. 19.

(e) Job xxxiii. 19--24.

(f) 1 Pet. i. 6.

others too; and plunges himself anew into capital crimes; it may be, into crimes for which he afterwards suffers death; without those compunctions of conscience which he before felt; being hardened by a return into sin, attended with such dreadful aggravations.—This has been the case of *many*; and I pray GOD it may not be thus with *any of you*. But if there be any among you that were once under powerful awakenings; *any* that have cried out of *terrors on every side* (g); that have *confessed your sins*, it may be, with greater freedom, and a more particular detail of circumstances, than the *minister* who attended you could have desired, and have *resolved against them* with all the appearances of the most determinate purpose; and yet, after all, have *returned with the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire* (h); such have peculiar reason to be alarmed and terrified. Every day of *Divine patience* toward such is astonishing. And if to all this have been added the returns of *danger*, and signal interpositions of Providence for your *deliverance*, and yet there be no kindly impressions of penitence and gratitude on your hearts, they who know the particulars of the case; must surely look upon you with horror as well as with wonder: for what can one imagine of such, but that they are given over by GOD to a *darkness*, which nothing but the *flames of hell* can enlighten; and a *hardness*; which nothing can penetrate but the sharpness of *unquenchable fire*, and the gnawings of the *never-dying worm*? But to return from a digression, into which compassion towards such a deplorable case has insensibly led me, I would farther observe, that as these various *interpositions* of a remarkable *Providence*

(g) Job xviii. 11. (h) 2 Pet. ii. 22.

are often the *means* of working saving impressions on men's minds; so,

3. GOD is sometimes pleased to over-rule "*little and inconsiderable incidents in life,*" as the occasion of accomplishing *this happy change.*

As the *treasure* of the Gospel was at first put into *earthen vessels,* that the excellency of the power might appear to be of GOD, and not of man (i); so GOD, to make his own praise glorious (k), is sometimes pleased to produce the most important effects, by *causes* which seem in themselves *least considerable.* And it is astonishing to see from how small and seemingly unpromising a *seed* this *plant of Paradise* springs up, and with how little *cultivation* too in some instances, after Paul had long attempted in vain to plant, and Apollos to water (l).—A few lines in the Bible, or any other good book, perhaps taken up by chance, shall be the instrument; and a passage, on which the eye glances without expectation or design, shall strike to the heart, like an arrow from the bow of GOD himself; after quivers of the most pointed and polished shafts have been exhausted in vain, though such shafts were most skilfully aimed, and most vigorously discharged.—In other instances, a word dropped in conversation, and that perhaps no way remarkable either for its spirit or propriety, shall do that which the most solemn ordinances have not been capable of doing: an important encouragement, by the way, to abound in religious discourse, which GOD has sometimes been pleased to honour as the happy means of saving a soul from death, and laying a foundation for the delights of an everlasting friendship with those who have been so recovered.

(i) 2 Cor iv. 7.

(k) Psal. lxxvi. 2.

(l) 1 Cor. iii. 6. 7.

4. SOMETIMES this great work is accomplished  
 “ by *secret and immediate impressions* from  
 “ *GOD* upon the mind,” without any visible  
*means, instruments, or occasions* at all.

THESE things do not *frequently happen*; nor does it seem fit they should, lest any should be encouraged to expect them in the *neglect* of the *appointed means*. Nevertheless it is plain, in fact, that *GOD* is sometimes pleased to go *out of the common way*; and his mighty hand is to be acknowledged in it. The *reasons* are known to himself; and the *praise* is humbly to be ascribed to him, *who giveth not an account of any of his matters* (m).

IT is not, to be sure, so common now as it was in the days of *Elihu*, that *GOD* should *speak to men in a dream*, or *send instructions to them in slumberings on their bed* (n): yet I have myself known several who have ascribed their first religious awakenings to some awful *dream*, in which the solemnity of the judgment-day, or a view of the invisible world, has been represented to them with unspeakable terror; and others to whom, when they have waked in the night, some *words of Scripture* have occurred with such power, that they have not been able to divert their thoughts to any thing else; and that, when they themselves have not certainly known whether they were in the *Bible* or not.

I HAVE known those that, in the circle of their vain companions, and in the midst of their sensual delights, have been *struck to the very heart* with some such *Scripture* as this: *to be carnally minded is death* (o); or such a *text* as this has, on a sudden, darted into their minds; *The wrath of GOD, is re-*

(m) Job xxxiii. 13. (n) Job xxxiii. 15, 16. (o) Rom. viii. 6.

*reared from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men* (p). Such passages have seemed to ring and thunder in their ears; till the sound of their music, and the noise of their mirth have been quite overpowered, so that they have been driven from their revels to their knees, and have returned no more into *the paths of the destroyer*.

YEA, to add no more instances of this kind, I have known those of distinguished genius, polite manners, and great experience in human affairs, who, after having outgrown all the impressions of a *religious education*; after having been hardened, rather than subdued, by the most singular *mercies*, even various, repeated, and astonishing *deliverances*, which have appeared to themselves no less than miraculous; after having lived for years *without GOD in the world*, notoriously *corrupt themselves*, and labouring to the utmost to *corrupt others*; have been stopped on a sudden in the full career of their sin, and have felt such *rays* of the Divine presence, and of redeeming love, darting in upon their minds, almost *like lightning from Heaven*, as have at once roused, overpowered, and transformed them; so that they have come out of their secret chambers with an irreconcilable enmity to those *vices*, to which; when they entered them, they were the tamest and most abandoned slaves; and have appeared, from that very hour, the votaries, the patrons, the champions of *religion*; and after a course of the most resolute attachment to it, in spite of all the reasonings, or the raileries, the importunities, or the reproaches of its enemies, they have continued to this day some of its brightest ornaments: a change which I behold with equal wonder and delight, and

(p) Rom. i. 18.

which

which, if a nation should join in deriding it, I would adore as *the finger of GOD*.

In mentioning these things thus publickly, I do indeed take an uncommon freedom, which some may perhaps censure; but so far as *human testimony* can give an assurance of truth, I may justly say that *I speak what I know, and testify what, in its genuine and powerful effects, I have myself seen* (q). And since the possibility of *abusing* such condescensions of Divine mercy did not prevent their being granted, I cannot think it ought to engage me to be silent, when so natural an opportunity offered of declaring them, *to the glory of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will* (r). Yet I must repeat the *caution* which I before suggested, that it would be madness for any to *neglect GOD's appointed means* of operation, on presumption that they shall be added to the small list of those who have been such uncommon and astonishing trophies of the efficacy and sovereignty of *Divine grace*.

THESE remarks must for the present suffice, with regard to the *various occasions* by which GOD works upon men's minds; and I hope you will excuse me, if, in illustrating some of them, I have a little anticipated some things which might have been mentioned under the *third head*, in which I proposed,

III. To consider some *varieties* observable in  
 “ the manner in which *Divine grace* operates  
 “ on the mind.”

AND this *variety*, by the way, will be observable in many instances where the *occasions* are in general the same. Thus among those that are awakened by the *word of GOD*, or by *his providence*,—some

(q) John iii. 11.

(r) Ephes. i. 11.

are shaken by *strong terrors*;—some are melted down into *deep sorrow*;—others are astonished as it were, and captivated at once, by the *discovery of the love of GOD in Christ*;—and others are led on by such *gentle and gradual impressions*, that they can hardly recollect any remarkable *circumstance* at all relating to the *manner* in which this blessed work was begun, or conducted in their souls.

1. SOME converts are “awakened by *strong terrors*.”

IT is obvious, that *conviction of sin*, in some degree or another, is absolutely necessary to make way for the *entrance of the Gospel* into the soul. But the *degrees* are *various* in different persons; and as for those of whom we now speak, GOD *reproves them* aloud, and *sets their sins in order before them* (s), marshals them in dreadful array, as the expression imports; so that they seem like defenceless creatures surrounded with a whole host of enemies, whose weapons are raised for their destruction. Yea, GOD himself, the great, the terrible, the eternal, and omnipotent GOD, seems to *set them up as a mark for those arrows* (t), *the poison of which drinketh up their spirits* (u); and, as he himself expresses it, *He is unto them as a bear, or a lion, ready to tear and rent the very caul of their heart* (w). They come, as it were, to the trembling and terrifying *mountain of Sinai*, to *blackness, and darkness, and tempest* (x). The *conviction of guilt* is attended with such a sense of the *demerit of sin*, as fills them with horror and astonishment, and engages them to wish *in the bitterness of their souls*, that they had never been

(s) Psal. l. 21.

(t) Lam. iii. 12.

(u) Job vi. 4.

(w) Hos. xiii. 8.

(x) Heb. xii. 18.

born.



horn. They are left for a time, and that perhaps for weeks and months, to be, as it were, deafened with the loud thunders of the law: a dreadful sound, as *Eliphaz* expresses it, is in their ears (y), even the sentence of their own damnation; and the awful curse of an almighty sin-avenging GOD comes into their bowels like water, and like oil into their bones (z). They are filled with such deep remorse for their past sins, that they verily think no iniquity was ever like theirs, and that no punishment will be like theirs. They hardly see a glimmering of hope that they shall obtain deliverance, but expect, in a very little while, to be sealed up under wrath, if they are not already so. When they hear the offers and the promises of the Gospel, they can apply none of them to themselves, and find comfort in none: but every threatening and every curse of the book of GOD seems to have been written as their intended portion. And thus, perhaps, they continue for weeks, or for months together, expecting every day and every night that destruction from GOD, which is now a terror to them (a), should utterly swallow them up, and leave them neither root nor branch, neither comfort nor hope (b). The law is a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ (c), and it scourges them with most rigorous discipline: yea, the infernal lion roars over them, though he is not permitted to devour them: he particularly terrifies them when they think of approaching GOD, as if they were to meet with some peculiar danger there, where alone they can find their relief: or, if they do in broken accents utter their prayer before GOD, it seems to be shut out (d), and they are apprehensive that it is

(y) Job xv. 21.

(z) Psal. cix. 18.

(a) Job xxxi. 23.

(b) Mal. iv. 1.

(c) Gal. iii. 24.

(d) Lam. iii. 8.

*turned into sin* (e). Yet there is one thing to be observed in the midst of this scene of horror, and it is a circumstance of great importance; “that they  
 “*justify GOD* when he seems most inexorable,  
 “and subscribe to that sentence as righteous which  
 “dooms them to eternal ruin.”

2. OTHERS are “melted into *deep sorrows.*”

THEIR *eyes run down with tears*; and they are ready to wish that their *heads were waters, and their eyes fountains, that they might continue to weep day and night* (f). They see the evil of *sin*, and the misery to which it has reduced them, in a most deplorable view; and it may be, while those described under the *former head* are ready to *tremble* because they *cannot weep*, these are ready to *weep*, because they *cannot tremble*. They lament, among other things, the *want* of those *strong horrors* which some have felt: they cry out, “*Woe is me, for I am undone* (g); *I have destroyed myself, and in myself is not my help found* (h):” and it may be, they are a considerable time before they can persuade themselves there is any *help* for them, even in *GOD*. They know there is *help in him through Christ* for penitent and believing sinners: but they cannot easily be convinced that *they believe*, because they do not feel that *confident trust* which some others have much sooner been brought to: and they are afraid, lest whatever they experience, which looks like *repentance*, should be only the false appearance of it, proceeding from mere self-love and a natural dread of future misery. They dwell perpetually on the *dark side* of things: they read over the catalogue of their *iniquities* again and again, and attend to those passages in which *the wrath of GOD is revealed from Heaven*

(e) Psal. cix. 7.

(f) Jer. ix. 1, 18.

(g) Isa. vi. 5.

(h) Hos. xiii. 9.

against every kind and degree of *sin* (i); while they are *slow of heart* to admit those reviving *consolations* which the various rich and precious *promises* of the *Gospel* are so admirably well calculated to administer.

THE state of such souls, when they are *first* savingly *enlightened*, is like that of the *earth*, when *fogs* and *mists* have veiled the face of the *sun* after it is risen. But it very often happens, with respect to such souls, that when these *mists* are at length dispersed, a very bright and cheerful *day* opens: they are comforted by the warmer beams of the *Sun of Righteousness*, according to the hours in which they have been *beclouded*, and are *made glad according to the days in which they were afflicted* (k): and going on to *fear the Lord*, and to *obey the voice of his servant*, though they have long *walked in darkness, and seen no light*, they are at length encouraged by his spirit enforcing the exhortations of his word, to *trust in the name of the Lord, and stay themselves upon their GOD* (l).

3. SOME are “captivated with astonishing and  
“delightful views of the love of GOD in  
“Christ.”

THERE is always, as we observed before, in the *awakened soul* some *conviction of sin* and *apprehension of danger*; nevertheless, there are instances in which *GOD* *heals* almost as soon as he *wounds*, and *speaks peace* almost as soon as he *speaks trouble*. He graciously shortens, to some souls, the *pangs* of the *new birth*, and *gives them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness* (m). The news of *salvation by the blood, and righteousness*, and

(i) Rom. i. 18.

(k) Psal. xc. 15.

(l) Isa. l. 10.

(m) Isa. lxi. 3.

*grace of Christ; is received with so thankful a sense, with so joyful a compliance, that the soul, feeling beyond all doubt the cordial sincerity with which it embraces the offer, is filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory (n): the heart does magnify the Lord, and the spirit rejoices in GOD its Saviour (o).*

THIS was remarkably the case of the *jailor*, who *in the very night* in which he was converted, *that same night* in which the foundation of his house had been shaken, and his own soul too shaken, *by an earthquake*, so that he had endeavoured to *lay violent hands on himself*: yet, I say, *that very night*, before the *day* appeared, having been directed to *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*, that he might *be saved*, and been enabled, by Divine grace, to comply with the exhortation, it is added concerning him, that *he rejoiced, believing in GOD with all his house (p)*.—Thus too the *Thessalonians*, though they *received the word in much affliction*, and ran the risque of losing their possessions and their lives in adhering to it, yet received it *with joy of the Holy Ghost (q)*. And though I cannot say *this is GOD's most ordinary way* of dealing, and though I fear the *counterfeit appearance* of such a work as this often leaves men in the number of those whom *our Lord* represents by *stony ground hearers (r)*; yet it is certain, *some instances* of this kind are still to be found. But then I must observe, *this is a joy* attended with the deepest *humility*, and animates the soul to the most ardent and affectionate resolution of *walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power,*

(n) 1 Pet. i. 8.

(o) Luke i. 46, 47.

(p) Acts xvi. 34.

(q) 1 Thess. i. 6.

(r) Mat. xiii. 20, 21.

unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness (s).

4. OTHERS, and these perhaps the greatest part of such as are *religiously educated*, are “led  
“ on by such *gentle and insensible degrees*,  
“ that they can hardly recollect any remarkable  
“ *circumstances* that have attended their *con-*  
“ *version*, nor can certainly fix on the par-  
“ *ticular time* of it.”

GOD is sometimes, as in the preceding instances, in the *whirlwind*, the *earthquake*, and the *fire*; but he is also frequently in the *still small voice* (t). The *operations* of the *Holy Spirit* on the soul are often, and perhaps generally, of such a nature, that it is difficult exactly to distinguish them from the *rational exercise* of our own thoughts, because the *spirit operates* by suggesting *rational views* of things, and awakening *rational affections*. For whatever some have vainly and dangerously insinuated, nothing is so *rational* as the sentiments and temper which prevail in *renewed souls*, and to which it is the *work* of God's regenerating *spirit* to bring them.

THESE *operations*, where there is a *religious education*, often begin very early; but then, in some degree, the *impressions wear off* from the weak and flexible mind; and perhaps there are various instances in which they alternately *revive* and *decay* again. And this *vicissitude* of affectionate *applications to religion* (under moving *ordinances*, *afflictions*, or *deliverances*) and of *back-slidings* and *remissness* in it, may be permitted, with respect to many, to continue for a long time. At length, under the various methods of *Providence* and *Grace*, the soul arrives to greater *steadiness*, and

(s) Col. i. 10, 11.

(t) 1 Kings xix. 11, 12.

a more habitual *victory* over the remainders of *in-dwelling sin*: but it may be exceeding hard, and perhaps absolutely impossible, to determine concerning some *remarkable scenes* through which it has passed, whether *such a one* in particular, perhaps *the last* which strikes the memory, were the *season* of its *new birth*; or whether it were merely a *recovery* from such a degree of *negligence* and *remissness*, as may possibly be consistent with real *religion*, and be found in a *regenerate* soul.

THESE *balancings* of *backsliding* and *recovery* often occasion very great *perplexity*; and such sort of *converts* are frequently much discouraged, because they cannot give the history of their *religious experiences* in so clear and distinct a manner as others; and particularly, because they have not passed through such *violent terrors* and *agitations of mind* as many, who were perhaps once sunk into much deeper *degeneracy*, have done. Nevertheless, where there is a *consciousness* of an undissembled *love to GOD*, an unreserved *devotedness to his service*, a cordial *trust in the Lord Jesus Christ*, and a sincere *affection to mankind* in general, and especially *to those of the household of faith*, a man ought not to perplex himself on this account. For as every man knows he was *born into the world*, by a *consciousness* that he now *lives and acts* here, though it is impossible he should remember any thing of the *time or circumstances* in which he was first produced into it: so may a *Christian* be assured, that some way or another he was *born of the Spirit* if he can trace its genuine *fruits and efficacious influences* in a *renewed heart and life*.

I HAVE thus laid down *several particulars*, which appeared to me important, in order to illustrate *that diversity* which is observable in the *methods*

*methods* of the *Divine operation* on the heart: and they will naturally lead us to these *three reflections*, with which I shall conclude my present Discourse.—Let us not make *our own experiences* a standard for *others*;—nor the *experiences of others* a standard for *ourselves*;—nor let us be unwilling, in a prudent manner, to *communicate* our spiritual *experiences* to each other.

[1.] LET us not make *our own experiences* a standard for *others*:

LET us remember that there is, as we have heard, a *diversity of operations*; and that many a person may be a dear *child of GOD*, who was not born just with those *circumstances* which attended *our own regeneration*. Others may not so particularly have discerned the *time*, the *occasion*, the *progress* of the *change*: they may not have *felt* all that we *felt*, either in the way of extraordinary *terror* or extraordinary *comfort*; and yet, perhaps, may *equal*, or even *exceed us* in that *holy temper*, to which it was the great intention of our *Heavenly Father*, by one *method* or another, to bring *all his children*. Nay I will add, that *Christians* of a very amiable and honourable character may express themselves but in a *dark*, and something of an *improper manner*, concerning the *doctrine of regeneration*, and may, in conscience, *scruple the use* of some *phrases* relating to it, which we judge to be exceeding suitable; and yet, *that very scruple* which displeases us may proceed from a *reverence* for *GOD* and *truth*, and from such a *tenderness of heart* as is the effect of his *renewing grace*. We should therefore be very *cautious* how we *judge* each other, and take upon us to *reject those* whom perhaps *GOD has received*.

I REMEMBER good *Dr. Owen*, whose candour was, in many respects, very remarkable, carries

this so far, as somewhere to say, “that some may, perhaps, have experienced the *saving influences* of the *Holy Spirit* on their *hearts*, who do not *in words* acknowledge the *necessity*, or even the *reality* of those influences.” *Judging men’s hearts*, and *judging their states*, is a work for which we are so ill qualified, that we have reason to be exceeding thankful it is not assigned to us. And when we are entering into such an *examination* of their *character*, as our duty may in some particular circumstances seem to require, we should be very solicitous that we do not lay down arbitrary and precarious rules. It seems, indeed, that so far as we can learn it, we may more safely judge by their *present temper* and *conduct*, than by the *history* of any thing which has *formerly passed* in their minds.

AND let me add it as a necessary *caution* here, that they who never *felt* any of the extraordinary *emotions of the mind*, which have been described under some *former heads*, but have been brought to *religion* by less observable methods, perhaps by *calm rational views of it* (of whom I believe there are great numbers) should be very *cautious* that they do not rashly *censure such things* as I have now been representing, as if they were *mere enthusiasm*. I cannot but think *this* a criminal *limiting the Holy One of Israel* (u), and fear it will be found a *boldness* highly *displeasing* to *him*, and very *injurious* to the *souls* of those who allow themselves in it, and of *others* too, if they be such as are employed in the *ministerial work*: not now to insist on what, in comparison of *this* is but a small matter, the apparent *rudeness* and *petulancy* of contradicting *facts* so well attested as many of

(u) Psal. lxxviii. 41.



this kind have been, and running counter to the solid *effects* which such impressions have produced. The *rashness* which prevails under different forms among men of the most opposite sentiments is too obvious; but if we would give ourselves leave calmly to weigh and consider matters, *our spirits* would be rendered on all sides *more moderate*, and many harsh and hasty *censures* would be *suspended*, which at present prove very little more than the *ignorance, pride, and folly* of those that pass them.

[2.] LET us not make the *experiences of others* a standard for *ourselves*.

THIS is frequently the case, and especially with those who are naturally of an *humble and tender temper*; for whose peace and comfort therefore one cannot but be peculiarly solicitous. Having heard of some *extraordinary experiences of others*, they are ready to imagine, because they can trace nothing correspondent to *these* in their *own minds*, that they are utter *strangers* to real *regeneration*, and have nothing more than such *religious notions and forms*; as *natural men* may easily learn of each other.

BUT what I have now been saying of the *variety* of the *Divine operations* on the heart, affords a solid *answer* to such *scruples* when they arise in a pious mind. Reflect, on this occasion, how it is in the *works of nature*: there we know that *GOD* works in all, so that he is *the life and existence* of the whole creation; and yet, as an excellent writer expresses it; "He alone seems not to work:" his *agency* is so *invisible and secret*, that did not *reason and scripture* join to teach it, one might live a great many years in the world without knowing any thing more, than that such and such *effects* are produced by correspondent *second causes*: though in strict propriety of speech they are *no causes* at all, but

but owe all their *efficacy* to the *Divine presence* and *operation*. Sense tells us that the *sun* enlightens the earth, and warms it; that the *rain* waters it, the *seeds* produce vegetables, and the *animals* continue their proper race: but that *GOD* is the *Father of Lights* (w), that he *has prepared the light and the sun* (x); that he *visits the earth, and causes rain to descend into the furrows thereof* (y), so as to *make the grass to grow for cattle, and corn and herb for the service of man* (z); that he *sends forth his spirit*, and the animal race is *created*, and *the face of the earth renewed* (a); this I say is what multitudes of the human race are not aware of; because in all these things he *acts* in a gentle, stated, and regular manner, and employs *inferior agents* as the *instruments of his providence*. And just thus gentle, silent, and regular are the *influences of his spirit* upon men's souls; and it is often impossible exactly to *distinguish them* from the *teachings of parents and ministers*, and from those *reflections* which seem to spring from our *own minds*, though it is *he that gives us counsel*, while *our reins instruct us* in our secret musings (b), and that *teaches us to profit by the lessons which others give us*.

Be not therefore *surprized*, and be not *dejected*, though you cannot assign the *place, the time, the manner*, in which your *conversion* began; and though you are *strangers* to the *terrors, the sorrows, or the transports of joy*, which you have heard one another express. *The wind bloweth where it listeth*, and the *spirit dispenses his influences where and when*, and in what *measure and degree* he pleases: but while the *way and*

(w) Jam. i. 17.      (x) Psal. lxxiv. 16.      (y) Psal. lxxv. 9, 10.  
 (z) Psal. civ. 14.      (a) Psal. civ. 30.      (b) Psal. xvi. 7.

manner of his operation may be secret and unknown, the effects of it are sensible and evident; and as with regard to the wind, thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit (c). You may not certainly know when to fix the precise time of your conversion, or how to trace the particular steps by which it has been brought to pass; for as thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of GOD who maketh all (d). But though you cannot trace the process of the operation, the effects of it are such as you may feel within you, and by its fruits it will be known (e). It is indeed desirable to be able to give an account of the beginning and the progress of the works of GOD upon your souls, as some that are regenerate can do; but this is not necessary to evidence the truth of grace. Happy is he who in this case can say, as the blind man in the gospel, *One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see* (f). For as you know that there is fire when you see the flame, though you know not how or when it began: so also it may be discerned, that you have really undergone a saving change, though you know not how or when it was wrought in your hearts. If you answer the characters I laid down in the preceding discourses, as essential to the truly regenerate (which are all comprehended in repentance and faith, producing an unfeigned love and uniform obedience) you may trace the cause from the effect with far greater certainty than you could have traced such an effect, as what would in-

(c) John iii. 8.

(d) Eccl. xi. 5.

(e) Mat. vii. 20.

(f) John ix. 25.

fallibly

fallibly follow from any *cause* which you could have perceived in your minds previous to it. There may be *great awakenings, violent terrors, and ecstatic joys*, where there is no *saving work of GOD* on the soul: but where the *Divine image* is produced, and the *soul* is actually *renewed*, we are sure (as was before observed) that *grace has been working*, though we know not *when or where, or how*. — And therefore on the whole, guarding against *both these extremes*, and to cure them *both*,

[3.] LET *Christians*, in a prudent and humble manner, be ready to *communicate* their *religious experiences* to each other.

GOD undoubtedly intended that the *variety of his operations* should be observed and owned in the *world of grace*, as well as in *that of nature*; and as *these things* pass in the secret recesses of men's hearts, how should they be *known*, unless they will themselves *communicate* and *declare* them? And let me *caution you* against that *strange averseness to all freedoms of this kind*, which, especially in persons of a *reserved temper*, is so ready to prevail. Let not any think it *beneath them* to do it. You well know that *David*, who was not only a man of an admirable genius, but a mighty prince too, was far from thinking it so; on the contrary, deeply impressed with the *Divine condescension* in all the *gracious visits* he had received from him, he calls, as it were, the whole pious world around him, that they might be edified and comforted by the relation: *Come, says he, and hear, all ye that fear GOD, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul* (g). He proclaimed it, not with his voice and harp alone, but with his immortal pen: and many other *noble and excellent persons* concurred with

(g) Psal. lxxvi. 16.

him; and the invaluable treasure of *their experiences*, in as great a variety of circumstances as we can well imagine, is transmitted to us in the *book of psalms*. Can any just reason then be assigned, why *they* who live under a *nobler dispensation*, and a more abundant *communication of the Spirit*, should be entirely *silent* on this subject?

THERE may indeed be an *over-forwardness* which is the apparent effect of *pride and self-conceit*, and which, with thinking people, may bring even the *sincerity* of the speaker into question, or put his *indiscretion* beyond all possibility of being questioned. But it would be very *unreasonable* to argue, that because a thing may be *done ill*, it cannot possibly be *done well*.

WHY may not intimate friends *open their hearts* to each other on such delightful topicks? Why may not they who have met with any thing peculiar of this kind, *communicate it* to their *minister*? And though I must in conscience declare against making it absolutely and universally *a term of communion*, yet I am well-assured that in some instances a prudent and serious *communication* of these things to a *Christian society*, when a person is to be *admitted into fellowship* with it, has often answered very valuable ends. By this means *GOD* has the honour of his own work; and *others* have the pleasure of sympathizing with the *relator*, both in his sorrows and his joys: they derive from hence so additional satisfaction as to *his fitness* for an approach to the *Lord's-table*; they learn with pleasure the *Divine blessing* which attends the *administration of ordinances* among them; and make observations and remarks which may assist them in offering their *addresses* to *GOD*, and in giving proper *advices* to others who are in circumstances *like those* related. To all which we may add, that the *ministers of Christ*

*Christ* do, in particular, learn what may be a means of forming them to a more *experimental* manner of *preaching*, as well as in many instances discover those, before unknown, *tokens of success* which may *strengthen their hands* in the work of their great *Master*.

IT is by frequent *conversations of this kind*, that I have learnt many of the *particulars* on which I have grounded the *preceding discourse*. I hope therefore you will excuse me, if, on so natural an occasion, I have borne *my public testimony* to what has been so *edifying* to me, both as a *minister* and a *Christian*. And the tender regard which I have for *young persons* training up for the *work of the ministry*, and my ardent *desire* that they may learn *the language of Sion*, and have “those peculiar *advantages* which nothing but an acquaintance with *cases*, and an observation on *facts* can give,” has been a farther inducement to me to add *this reflection*, with which I conclude my discourse; humbly hoping that what you have heard upon this occasion will, by the *Divine blessing*, furnish out agreeable matter for *such conversation* as I have now recommended, to the glory of *GOD*, and to the advancement of *religion* among you. *Amen!*

## SERMON IX.

## DIRECTIONS to awakened Sinners.

## ACTS IX. 6.

*And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?—*

**T**HESSE are the words of *Saul*, who also is called *Paul* (a), when he was stricken to the ground as he was going to *Damascus*: and any one who had looked upon him in his present circumstances, and know nothing more of him than that view, in comparison with his past life could have given, would have imagined him one of the most *miserable* creatures that ever lived upon *earth*, and would have expected that he should very soon have been numbered amongst the most *miserable* of those in *hell*. He was engaged in a course of such savage *cruelty*, as can, upon no principle of common *morality*, be vindicated, even though the *Christians* had been as much mistaken, as he rashly and foolishly concluded they were. After having dragged many of them into prison, and given his voice against some that were put to death, he persecuted others into strange cities; and had now obtained a commission from the Sanhedrim at

(a) Acts xiii. 9.

*Jerusalem* to carry this holy, or rather this impious war into *Damascus* (b), and to bring all the *proselytes* to the religion of the blessed *Jesus* bound from thence to *Jerusalem* (c); probably that they might there be animadverted upon with greater severity than could safely have been attempted by the *Jews* in so distant a city, under a foreign governor.

BUT behold, as he was in the way, *Jesus* interposes, cloathed with a *lustre* exceeding that of the sun at noon (d). He strikes him down from the beast on which he rode, and lays him prostrate on the ground, calling to him with a voice far more dreadful than that of thunder, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me* (e)?

ANY one would have imagined, from the circumstances in which we now beheld *Saul*, that *Divine vengeance* had already begun to seize him, and that full *execution* would quickly have been done. But *GOD's ways are not as our ways, nor are his thoughts as our thoughts* (f). *Christ* laid him almost as low as *hell*, that he might raise him as high as the *third heaven*; of which he afterwards gave him a view in vision, to anticipate his reception into it (g). *This day of his terror and astonishment* was, in a nobler sense than any other, *the day of his birth*; for he is brought to bow himself at the foot of an injured *Saviour*, to offer him, as it were, a *blank* upon which to write his own terms of peace; and as soon as he heard that this glorious person was *Jesus, whom, in his members, he had so long persecuted*, he makes his submission in these lively comprehensive words, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*—This was not a time for a long speech; but he that discerns

(b) Acts xxvi. 10—12. (c) Acts ix. 2. (d) Acts xxvi. 13.  
 (e) Acts ix. 4. (f) Isa. lv. 8. (g) 2 Cor. xii. 2.



all the secret recesses of the spirit, knew *these few words* were full of a most important meaning, and expressed not only a *grief of heart*, for all that he had before been doing against *Christ* and his kingdom, but the sincerest *resolution* for the future to employ himself in his service, waiting only the intimations of his wise and gracious will, as to the most proper and acceptable manner of beginning the attempt.

THERE is, methinks, a poignant kind of *eloquence* in this *short expression*, far beyond what any *paraphrase* upon it can give: and our *compassionate Lord* accepted this surrender. All his former *rebellions* were no more remembered against him; and before he rose from *the ground*, to which he fell on so terrible an occasion, *Christ* gave him an intimation, not only that his forfeited life should be spared, so that he should get safe *into the city* to which he was bound, but that he should *there be instructed* in that *service* which *Jesus*, whom he had *persecuted*, would now condescend to receive at his hands.

I REPRESENT the case thus largely, because I hope it is a case which, in some measure, *suits the experience* of some that hear me this evening. *Paul* tells us, it was *for this reason*, among others, that he himself *obtained mercy*, though he was *the chief of sinners*, that in him, as the chief, *Jesus Christ* might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should afterwards believe (h).

Is there then, in this assembly, *any* awakened and convinced sinner; *any one* that, apprized of his folly, and sensible of his misery, is desirous to fall at the foot of *Christ*, and say with *Saul, Lord,*

(h) 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

*what wilt thou have me to do? That which I see not, teach thou me; and wherein I have done iniquity, I will do so no more (i)!*—To such would I now especially address: and while I put the question, *Is there any such among us?* I would fain persuade myself, there are several: for I humbly hope, that *all the labours* that have been bestowed in the *preceding Discourses* are not *in vain*, nor *all the prayers* that have been offered for their success *in vain*; *prayers* which, I doubt not, have been carried by many of you into your *families* and your *closets*, as well as jointly presented to *GOD* in this *public assembly*. Trusting therefore that it is thus with *some*, and *praying* that it may be a more frequent case, I proceed,

SIXTHLY, to give some *directions* to *such* who are *awakened* by *Divine* grace to a sense of their misery in an *unregenerate state*, and are brought to desire recovery from it.

To *such* I propose to give *directions*: and to what purpose would it be to undertake to offer them to *any others*? Who would pretend to teach *those* who are *unconcerned* about their salvation, what methods they are to take in order to their becoming truly *regenerate*? This, methinks, would be like giving *directions* how those might learn to *write* who do not desire it, and will not take a pen into their hands. All I could say to such, while they continue in this character, would vanish into empty air: it would not, probably, be so much as observed and remembered. I speak therefore to *awakened souls*, and to such it is pleasant to address on this head. *Ananias* undoubtedly undertook this message to *Saul* with cheerfulness, to tell him what *Christ* would have him to do: and I would with

(i) Job xxxiv. 32.

pleasure and chearfulness engage in the like work; humbly hoping, that *some will hear* with observation and attention, *will hear for themselves*, and so *hear for their good* (k). And to this purpose let me *advise* you—to *attend* to the *impressions* that have been made upon you with great seriousness—to *break off* every thing that is *contrary* to them—to *seek* for further *knowledge* in religious matters—to *pour out your souls* before GOD in earnest *prayer*—to *communicate* the state of *your case* to some experienced *Christian*—to *acquaint yourselves* with *such* as are much in *your own circumstances*—to *fly* immediately to *Christ*, as ready to receive all that come to him—to *dedicate yourselves* to him, and to his service, in the most solemn manner—to *arm yourselves* to encounter with the greatest *difficulties* in your *Christian* course—and finally, to *take every step* in this attempt with a deep sense of *your own weakness*, and a humble dependance upon *Divine grace* to be communicated to you as the matter requires.—These are the several *directions* I would offer to you: and may they be *impressed* in such a manner on your souls, that none of you may *lose the things* that have been *wrought* (l), but by the effectual *writing* of the *mighty power* of GOD (m), such as he graciously has been pleased to *bring to the birth*, may be *brought forth* (n), and such as are *awakened* may be *savingly renewed*!

1. I WOULD advise you to “*attend to the impressions made upon you with great seriousness.*”

THEY may perhaps take you a little off *the world* and its concernments; and some will *blame* you for

(k) Job v. 27,

(l) 2 John, ver. 8,

(m) Ephes. i. 19.

(n) Isa. lxvi. 5.

suffering

suffering such an interruption: but regard not *that censure*. The time will come, if you pursue these things aright, when renewed diligence, prudence, and the Divine blessing, will amply make amends for any present *hindrance* which *these impressions* may occasion. And if it should be otherwise, *were there not a cause?* If a man seized with a threatening *distemper* should choose, for a little while, to lay aside his usual business, that he might attend to the care of his health, before the symptoms grew incurable, would any body *blame him* for this? On the contrary, would it not be looked upon as acting a very wise, prudent, and necessary part? *Much more* may be said here, *It is not a light thing for you, because it is your life* (o): And if *the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment* (p), then surely *the soul* is more to be regarded than either. And therefore what you do in your *worldly affairs*, do moderately; and do not grudge *that retirement* which is so necessary in such a tender circumstance as this.—I may apply to you, on this occasion, those words of *Solomon*; *Through desire a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom* (q). If you desire to attain *Divine wisdom*, you must *separate yourself* from all other things to pursue it.—And it is the more necessary to *attend to this now*, because *the tempter* may probably contrive to lay some more than ordinary avocation in your way, at a time when the interest of his kingdom requires you should be diverted from prosecuting those views which are presenting themselves to you, and by which you may so probably be rescued out of his hands, and put for ever out of his power.

(o) Deut. xxxii. 47.

(p) Mat. vi. 25.

(q) Prov. xviii. 2.

2. LET me advise you to “*break off every thing which is contrary to such impressions as these.*”

SIN will immediately appear to have been your disease and your ruin: and therefore, if ever you hope for recovery, you must resolutely *break with that*; not merely with *this* or *that* particular evil, but with *every sin*; and that not only for a little while, but *entirely and for ever*. A mortal irreconcilable war must be declared against it. Every *fleshly lust* must be *denied*, every *immoral practice*, for which your heart may at any time smite you, must be *reformed*; and if ever you expect to *reap mercy and life*, you must, as the *Prophet* expresses it, *break up your fallow ground* (r), and *not sow among thorns* (s). For *Righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness, and light no communion with darkness* (t). And you may be assured, that as *all sin grieves the spirit of GOD*, and strengthens the heavy *fetters* which lie upon the soul; so *those sins* which are committed after these *awakenings and convictions*, have a peculiar guilt attending them, and do greater *despite to the spirit of grace* (u), in proportion to the degree in which his motions on the soul have been vigorous and warm.

3. “*SEEK further knowledge,*” especially from *the word and ordinances of GOD*.

THE *influences of Divine grace* are not to be considered as a *blind impulse*; but *GOD's spirit* works on the *spirit of man*, as one rational being on another. The *Apostle* therefore puts the question with great reason, *How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard* (w)?

(r) Hos. x. 12.

(s) Jer. iv. 3.

(t) 2 Cor. vi. 14.

(u) Heb. x. 29.

(w) Rom. x. 14.

And

And as *some knowledge* is the foundation on which the *spirit of GOD* ordinarily operates in men's hearts; so in proportion to the degree in which you attain *further light* into the scheme of the *Gospel*, and of *salvation by Christ*, it may be expected you will be more impressed by it. The mention of this is so much the more necessary, as *mistaken notions of religion* often expose people on the one hand, to great *perplexities*, and on the other, betray them into a *false peace*, which one way or another *will be bitterness in the end*.—Come therefore to the *house of GOD*, and attend *spiritual preaching*. The question is not about *forms*, but *things*. Be not therefore over-scrupulous about what is merely *circumstantial* in religion, on the one hand or the other: but where you find most *spiritual light* and improvement, *there* choose generally to attend; not *confining religion* to any particular party, nor *judging those* who differ from you in their sentiment or practice; but calmly and humbly seeking *your own edification*, leaving others to seek *theirs* where they are persuaded, in the sight of GOD, they may most probably find it.—Above all, remember, in this circumstance, to make *the word of GOD* the *man of your counsel* (x), and to judge of what you read and hear by the tenor of *that*, as the *oracle* of eternal truth; always attending the reading of it with earnest *prayer* to GOD for the illumination of his *spirit*, as I shall afterward more particularly direct.—No *other books* are to be set up in opposition to *this*, or in comparison with it, yet let it be your care, in subordination to *Scripture*, to study the *writings* of those *faithful servants* of GOD in latter ages, who themselves mani-

(x) Psal. cxix. 24.

fest a sense of *practical religion*. Especially endeavour to find out and peruse *those writings* which treat of *conversion* and *regeneration*, and which contain advice suited to your case. Blessed be GOD, our language abounds with *such*; and every truly *Christian minister* will be glad to direct you to them, and so far as he has a convenient opportunity to furnish you with them.

4. “*Pour out your soul* before GOD in earnest  
“*prayer.*”

You cannot be unacquainted with the many *promises* GOD has made in *Scripture*, for the encouragement of those who *desire* to *pray* to him in the sincerity of their hearts. You know into how little a compass *Christ* has crowded together *three* equivalent *promises*; *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you* (y): and you cannot but remember the *three-fold* encouragement, from the *success* of those who have recourse to this expedient, which he has added in the most express and general terms: *For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened* (z). Go, therefore, in a cheerful dependence upon this *promise*: go, and try the truth of it. *Whither* should a creature in such circumstances go, but to *that GOD*, who has *the hearts* of all in his hand as the *rivers of water*, and turns them *whithersoever* he will (a)? And *who* should go to him, rather than you?—And in *what* circumstances should a distressed creature rather think of looking and crying to him, than *in these*; where it sees itself surrounded with so much *danger*, and yet feels an inward earnest *desire*, not only of *deliverance*, but

(y) Mat. vii. 7.

(z) Ver. 5.

(a) Prov. xxi. 1.

of holiness too?—Go, therefore, and cast yourself at the feet of GOD *this very evening*; do it as soon as you return to your habitations; and if you cannot put your thoughts and desires into words, at least *sigh* and *groan* before the Lord. *Mourn*, if you cannot *pray*; and *mourn* that *you cannot*; or rather be assured, that *unutterable groanings* have sometimes the greatest efficacy, and prove the most prevailing eloquence.

IT will be no wonder at all, if in these circumstances *Satan* should endeavour to terrify you. It is his common practice. So many souls have vanquished him, *upon their knees*, that he dreads and hates *the posture*: but draw an argument from that very *opposition* to make you so much the more eager and importunate; and *when your heart is overwhelmed within you*, fly unto the rock that is *higher than you* (b).

I WILL add, Be not discouraged, though *help* be not immediately imparted. Though you may seem to be *cast out of GOD's sight*, yet *look again towards his holy temple* (c): though you seem to *cry from the deeps*, and almost *from the belly of hell* (d), the bowels of a heavenly Father will yearn over you as *returning prodigals*; and I doubt not you will meet with the reception that *Ephraim* found, when GOD saw him *bemoaning* and *humbling himself*, because he had been *as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*; when he cried, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my GOD*; his heavenly Father answers him in these most affectionate words; attend to them, O thou returning sinner, for thy comfort in this hour of distress! *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I*

(b) Psal. lxi. 2.

(c) Jonah ii. 4.

(d) Ver. 2.

spake



*spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him, and I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord (c).*

5. I WOULD advise you farther, that you “immediately communicate the state of your case to some experienced Christian.”

I KNOW there is a *backwardness* in persons of your circumstances to do it; and it has been surprising to me, to learn from the converse of some, who, in this respect, have afterwards grown wiser, how long they have been *pinning away* in their sorrows before they could be persuaded to consult their *ministers or Christian friends*. It is a stratagem of *Satan*, against which I would by all means caution you. And one would think your own reason would suggest some very obvious *advantages* attending the method I propose, of *opening your case freely* to those whom you think to be more *experienced* in these things. The *impression* may be *revived* upon your own souls, even by the account you give them: and *their advice* may be exceeding useful to you to *guard you* against the *wiles of the enemy* which *they* have known, though hitherto *you* are strangers to them; and to *guide you* into such methods as, by the Divine blessing, may farther promote that *good work* which seems, in any measure, to have been begun within you. You may also depend upon it that it will engage *their prayers* for you; which, in this case, may have great prevalency. And it will also naturally lead them to *inspect your conduct*; and if they see you afterwards in danger of being drawn aside, they may *remind you* of the *hopes* once entertained, and the *impressions* once

(c) Jer. xxxi. 18, 20.

made upon your mind.—In this respect you may hope, that by *walking with wise men you will be yet wiser* (f); and will soon find how happy an exchange you make, when you give up your *vain*, and perhaps *wicked companions*, that you may become *the companion of them that fear GOD, and that keep his precepts* (g); and may have *your delight in them*, who, in the judgment of *GOD*, are *the excellent of the earth* (h), however they may be despised and derided by men.

6. I WOULD also advise that you “endeavour  
“to search out those, if there be any such  
“about or near you, who are much in your  
“own circumstances.”

OBSERVE, especially among *young people*, whether there are any that seem of late to have grown more serious than ordinary; and particularly more constant in attending the ordinances of *GOD*, and more cautious in venturing on occasions and temptations to sin: and if you can discover *such*, endeavour to form *an acquaintance* with them. Try by proper hints how far *their circumstances* resemble *yours*; and as you find encouragement, enter into a stricter *friendship* with them, founded on *religion*, and intended to promote it in each others hearts. Associate yourselves in little *bands* for *Christian converse* and *prayer*; and by this means you will *quicken*, and *strengthen* the hearts of *each other*. For on the one hand, what *they* tell you of their own *experience*, will much confirm you in a persuasion that what you find in yourselves is not a mere fancy, but is really a *Divine work* begun on your hearts, and will give you encouragement to pursue it as such: for *as face answers to face in water, so does the heart of*

(f) Prov. xiii. 20.

(g) Psal. cxix. 63.

(h) Psal. xvi. 3.

*man to man* (i): and on the other hand, the observation of *your pious zeal* will quicken others, and may occasion the *revival of religion* in the hearts of *elder Christians*; as, I bless God, I have found some things of this kind have done, and hope (and through the Divine blessing expect) to find it more and more. Therefore *exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin* (k). *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees* (l): and be assured, that while you are endeavouring to *help others*, you will find in *yourselves* the first-fruits of this happy attempt; and while you *water others*, you *will be watered also yourselves* (m).

7. IT is an advice of the highest importance, that “*whoever you are, you should immediately fly to Christ, and repose the confidence of your souls upon him.*”

OBSERVE that I urge you, WHOEVER YOU ARE, to *fly immediately to Christ*: and this I do, to guard against a *strange notion* which some are ready to entertain, as if we were to *bring something of our own righteousness and obedience* to him, to render us worthy of being *accepted by him*. But this is a grand mistake. The *blessings of the Gospel* are not to be considered as matter of *bargain and sale*: no, if we come to *buy wine and milk*, it must be *without money and without price* (n); and *whoever will take of the water of life*, must do it *freely* (o). If he pretend to offer an *equivalent*, he forfeits his share in the invitation; and must be made to know, that *the price* he offers is a great *affront* to the value of the *blessings*

(i) Prov. xxvii. 19.      (k) Heb. iii. 13.      (l) Isai. xxxv. 3.  
 (m) Prov. xi. 25.      (n) Isai. lv. 1.      (o) Rev. xxii. 17.

for which he would thus *barter*.—Let this then be your language, “ Lord, I have *undone myself*,  
 “ and *in me is no help*: I see nothing in my-  
 “ *self* which makes me worthy of thy regard; but  
 “ this I know, that *where sin has abounded, grace*  
 “ *does much more abound, and reigns through*  
 “ *righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ* (p);  
 “ *through whom* thou hast assured me in thy word  
 “ that *eternal life is the gift of GOD* (q). As  
 “ such let me receive it: and by how much the  
 “ more *undeserving* I have been, by so much the  
 “ more will I celebrate *the riches of thy grace* in  
 “ making me *a vessel of mercy*, and a monument  
 “ of love throughout all eternity.—Blessed *Jesus*,  
 “ thou hast said, that *him who comes unto thee*  
 “ *thou wilt in no wise cast out* (r): behold, *I come*,  
 “ and cast myself *at thy feet*; receive me, and  
 “ *put me among the children* (s), though I deserve  
 “ not the very *crumbs that fall from thy ta-*  
 “ *ble* (t).”

You will not, I hope, imagine that when I give such advice as this, I mean to insinuate that a person, *purposing to continue in his sins*, may nevertheless *come and receive the blessings of the Gospel*; for *that* would be no other than in the grossest manner to pervert and contradict the whole tenor of it. But *this* I say, and repeat it, that when once a sinner finds himself, by *Divine grace*, disposed to *turn from his sins to GOD*; and made willing to *accept the mercy* tendered in the *Gospel*, of which a *deliverance from sin* and a *renovation of nature* are a great, important, and essential part; he may with cheerfulness *apply himself* to the great *Redeemer* as one of those *whom he*

(p) Rom. v. 20, 21.      (q) Rom. vi. 23.      (r) John vi. 37.  
 (s) Jer. iii. 19.      (t) Mat. xv. 27.

*come* on purpose *to deliver*; and in proportion to the degree in which he can discern the sincerity of his sentiments, he may open his heart to *comfort*, how great soever his former *unworthiness* has been, and how lately soever such *impressions* may have been made upon his heart.

S. “MAKE the *dedication of yourselves* to  
“*Christ*, and his service as *solemn* a thing  
“as you can.”

WE read in the *Acts* of some that were *baptized*, and publickly *received into the church* the very *same day* in which they were converted (u): and though a change of circumstances may at present render it convenient to defer doing it for some time with the solemnity of the *ordinance of the Lord's supper*, which is peculiarly intended for that purpose; because it is proper that the efficacy of your *repentance* and *conversion* should first of all be so far seen, as in the judgment of charity to approve the *sincerity* of it: yet I think, when you feel your hearts absolutely *determined for GOD*, you should in a solemn manner *lay hold of his covenant*, in secret at least, *as soon as possible*; and declare, as before him *that searcheth all hearts*, the *sincerity* of that acceptance.—Some have recommended the doing this in a *written engagement*; and there are several very affecting forms of this kind in books on this subject, which may very profitably be used. But I hope the fulness of your heart will dictate something of this kind, if *such helps* should be wanting, or if any peculiar consideration should prevent their being used.—And surely, if you feel *the love of the blessed Jesus* glowing in your hearts as you ought, you will need no other engagement to yield yourselves to him:

(u) Acts ii. 41, 47.

*that love* will be instead of *ten thousand arguments*; and you will see a secret charm in the view of serving him, which will engage your very soul to spring forward with vigour and eagerness to every proper instance of it. The *dread of future punishment* has certainly its use to *restrain* from the commission of *sin*, especially in an hour of pressing temptation; and the *hope* of that *exceeding and eternal weight of glory* which the Gospel promises, will have a greater efficacy upon a generous mind: yet I will venture to say, that a heart powerfully impressed with *the love of Jesus* will have a yet stronger *influence* than *either of these*. Cordial *friendship* needs not to be *hired* to perform its proper office. *Love is a law to itself*: it adds a delightful relish to every attempt for the service of its object: and it is most evidently thus in the present case. “Lord,” will the *Christian* say, “wilt  
 “ thou do me the honour to accept any *feeble at-*  
 “ *tempt* for thy service which I can form? *I thank*  
 “ *thee* for it; and bow my head before thee in the  
 “ most grateful acknowledgements, that thou fa-  
 “ vourest me with *an ability* to discharge, in any  
 “ degree, the fulness of my grateful heart in pre-  
 “ senting them: Oh that *my whole soul* might  
 “ daily rise before thee as *an acceptable sacrifice*  
 “ in the flame of *love*! Oh that I might always feel  
 “ *my heart enlarged*, to run the way of thy  
 “ *commandments* (w)! were the degree of my fu-  
 “ *ture happiness* from this moment invariably *fixed*,  
 “ I would still pursue this delightful business; for  
 “ there is no other in which my soul could find a  
 “ *pleasure equal or comparable* to it.” If you  
 feel *such thoughts* as these rising in your mind,  
 breathe them out before the throne from day to

(w) Psal. cxix. 32.

day :

day: and when you have done it, recollect frequently *the vows of GOD* that are upon you (x); and see, that *having sworn, you perform it* (y), and maintain in the whole of your lives a conduct agreeable to such a profession as this.

9. “*GIRD up the loins of your mind, to encounter with a great deal of difficulty in your Christian course.*”

MANY are the *difficulties* that you must expect; *great*, and possibly for a while *increasing difficulties*. It is commonly said indeed, that *those difficulties* which attend the *entrance* on a religious life, are the *greatest*; and in themselves considered, no doubt but they are so: they arise from many quarters, and unite all together in the same design of keeping you from a believing application to *Christ*; and a resolute closure with him. In this respect, *evil* sometimes arises to a man *in his own house* (z); and those whose *near relation* should rather engage them to give *the young convert* the best assistance, where his most important interests are concerned, are on the contrary ready to lay a stumbling-block in his way; and perhaps act as if they had rather he should have *no religion* at all, than change a few circumstances in the outward profession of it. *Worldly interest* too is perhaps to be sacrificed; and *conscience* cannot be preserved without giving up the *friendship* of those whom at any other expence but *conscience* a man would gladly oblige. And it is no wonder if *Satan* make his utmost efforts, and those very unwearied too; that he may prevent the revolt of *these subjects*, or rather the escape of *his prisoners*. The *Christian* is therefore called upon by the *Apostle* to *arm himself* as for a combat, and that at all points; to put

(x) Psal. lvi. 12.

(y) Psal. cxix. 106.

(z) Matt. x. 35, 36.

on the whole armour of GOD that he may be able to withstand in the evil day; and having done all, to stand (a).

NOR must you, my friends, though as soon as you have put on your harness you gain some important victory, boast as if you might securely put it off (b). Your whole life must be a series of exercise. Through much opposition, as well as much tribulation, you must enter into the kingdom of GOD (c); and though your difficulties may generally be greatest at first, yet your encouragements then may perhaps be so peculiarly great, and your spirits under their first religious impressions so warm, that other difficulties, in themselves smaller, may press more sensibly upon you. Endeavour therefore to keep yourselves in a prepared posture: put on a steady resolution; and to support it, sit down and count the cost, lest having begun to build, you shamefully desist, and be not able to finish it (d); or having put your hand to the plough, you should look back, and become unfit for the kingdom of GOD (e). And therefore,

10. "LET every step in this attempt be taken  
 " with a deep sense of your own weakness,  
 " and a humble dependence upon Divine  
 " grace to be communicated to you as the  
 " matter requires."

RECOLLECT seriously what I was telling you in a former discourse, of the necessity of the Divine agency and interposition; and remember, it depends upon GOD, not only to begin the good work, but also to carry it on, and perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (f). If we trust in our own hearts, especially after this solemn admonition, this plain

(a) Ephes. vi. 11. 13. (b) 1 Kings xx. 11. (c) Acts xiv. 22.  
 (d) Luke xiv. 28, 30. (e) Luke ix. 62. (f) Phil. i. 6.



instruction, added to such frequent experience, we are fools indeed (g). Let us therefore *trust in the Lord, and not lean to our own understanding* (h). And do you, my friends, who have but just listed yourselves in this holy war, every one of you say, with an humble yet cheerful heart, *in the name of our GOD will we set up our banners* (i). And if thus you *wait on the Lord, you shall renew your strength*; and even the feeblest soul shall be enabled by *Divine grace to mount up with wings as eagles*, and to press on from one degree of religious improvement to another, while *the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall* (k). The *Apostle* expresses, in the liveliest manner, his dependence on the *Divine Redeemer* to communicate this grace in a proper degree, when he says, *Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need* (l); plainly implying, that it may be obtained if we have but hearts to seek for it; which, as on the one hand, it effectually takes off all idle excuses for the neglect of our duty, pleaded from our own acknowledged weakness any further than we are supported by the *Divine power*; so on the other hand it animates the heart, that, sensible of its various infirmities, desires nevertheless to go forth to the work of God, and to consecrate all its faculties to his service; using them, such as they are, for GOD, and humbly seeking from him the enlargement of them.

Go therefore, my friends, into the *Divine presence*; and while under a sense of this, be not discouraged, though *mountains of opposition*, may lie in your way. *Those mountains shall be made low, and spread themselves into a plain before you* (m);

(g) Prov. xxviii. 26.      (h) Prov. iii. 5.      (i) Psal. xx. 5.  
 (k) Isai xl. 30, 31.      (l) Heb. iv. 16.      (m) Isai. xl. 4.

while you go forth under the influences of *the Spirit of the Lord*, who is able to make all grace abound to his people (n).—Of this *Paul* in our text was a most celebrated instance, who not only received, as was here promised, *directions what he should do*, but had *strength* also given him to perform it; a *strength* which was *made perfect* and illustrious in his *weakness* (o): and when, in consequence of this, he had attained to very distinguishing improvements in religion, and had been enabled to act up in the most honourable manner, not only to the *Christian* character in general, but to that of a *minister* and an *Apostle*, he acknowledges in all his *abundant labours*; that it was not *he but the grace of GOD* that was *with him* (p).

IF it be thus with you, my brethren, you will be *established and built up in your most holy faith* (q). The most agreeable *hopes* we form concerning you, when we see you under such serious *impressions* as *this discourse* supposes, will be answered; and they *who have spoken to you the word of GOD*, on such occasions as these, will have the pleasure to think that they *have not run in vain* (r):

AND now if *these directions*, which I have offered to you with *great plainness* and *freedom*, but with the sincerest desire of your edification and establishment in religion, be seriously pursued, I shall have the satisfaction of thinking, that though I might find you in the number of the *unregenerate*: when I began *these lectures*, I shall carry you on along with me through the only *head* that yet remains to be handled; and shall indeed *address myself to you*, as those who *were sometimes darkness*,

(n) 2 Cor. ix. 8.      (o) 2 Cor. xii. 9.      (p) 1 Cor. xv. 18.  
 (q) Col. ii. 7.      Jude, ver. 20.      (r) Phil. ii. 16.

*but are now light in the Lord (s), when I proceed to address those who have been renewed by Divine grace, which I promised as my last general; and with which I shall conclude my Discourses on this important subject.*

(s) Eph. v. 8;

## SERMON X.

AN ADDRESS to the REGENERATE, founded  
on the preceding Discourses.

JAMES 1. 18.

*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.*

I INTEND the words, which I have now been reading, only as an *introduction* to that address to *the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty*, with which I am now to conclude *these Lectures*; and therefore shall not enter into any critical discussion, either of them, or of the context. I hope God has made the series of *these Discourses*, in some measure, *useful* to those for whose service they were immediately intended: but if they have not been so to *all*, and if with relation to *many* I have *laboured in vain* from sabbath to sabbath, I cannot be surprised at it. *What am I better than my fathers* (a)? It has, in every age, been *their complaint*, that they *have stretched out their hands all the day to a disobedient and gain-saying people* (b); that *the bellows have been burnt, and the lead consumed of the fire*, but the dross has not been taken away: such *reprobate silver* have

(a) 1 Kings xix. 4.

(b) Isa. lxxv. 2. Rom. x. 21.

multitudes been found (c). Yea, the *Lord Jesus Christ* himself, who spake with such unequalled eloquence, with such *divine energy*, yet met with multitudes, who were *like the deaf adder*, that would not hearken to the voice of the wisest charmer (d): and surely *the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord* (e).

WHEN indeed we consider the infinite importance of the message we address to you, Oh, ye perishing sinners! we hardly know how to give over, or to take a denial. We feel a strong impulse on our hearts to give *line upon line, and precept upon precept* (f): as a *physician* that loves his *patient*, when he sees the distemper prevailing, and has run through the whole range of medicines, is ready, while life yet remains, not entirely to give over, but to *repeat again* what he had prescribed unsuccessfully before. And if GOD spares our lives, no doubt many of those things which I have before been urging, must, in substance, be *repeated*. But at present I will desist: I know not what more or farther to say: and if you are utterly *unimpressed* with what I have already laid before you, especially with regard to the *character* of the *unregenerate*—the *nature* of *regeneration*—the *absolute necessity* of it—and of the *Divine Agency* in producing it;—I know not what further to urge, and must *leave you* either to the *grace* or the *judgment* of GOD. The time will certainly come, when you will see and own *the importance* of these things. *The word of GOD* will, in one sense or another, *take hold* of every soul that hears it, and perhaps on some of you in a very terrible manner, and in a very little time. But if it do, I may say with the apostle

(c) Jer. vi. 29, 30.

(d) Psal. lviii. 4, 5.

(e) Mat. x. 24.

(f) Isa. xxviii, 10.

*Paul,*

*Paul*, when in token of the solemnity with which he spoke; *he shook his raiment*, and took leave of his obstinate hearers, *I am clean from your blood* (g); and since you refuse to be instructed, *I turn to those* who will regard what I say. And thus, according to the method I at first proposed, I proceed.

SEVENTHLY, To conclude these Discourses with an *address* to those who, by *Divine grace*, are *experimentally* acquainted with this great work of *regeneration*; to shew them how they ought to be *affected* with the consideration of the truths that have been offered, and what *improvement* they should make of such a course of *Sermons* as you have lately been attending.

OUT of a general regard to the *glory of GOD*, and the *good of souls*, you have attended on what has hitherto been spoken to persons of a very *different character*; and I hope not altogether without some sensible refreshment and advantage: but now *hear more immediately for yourselves*, and *suffer a word of exhortation* in such particulars as these.—Be *thankful to GOD* for what you have *experienced*:—improve it as an *engagement to behave in a suitable manner*:—study to *promote the work of GOD* upon the hearts of *others*:—and *long for that blessed world* where the *change* that is now begun, and is gradually advancing in your souls, shall be *universal and complete*.—Your own wisdom and piety have, no doubt, prevented me in each of these particulars; but you will be glad to enter more fully into the reflection than you could do, while it was intermingling itself with other thoughts.

(g). Acts xviii. 6.

[1.] “ RETURN:

[1.] “RETURN the most affectionate acknowledgments of *praise* to the *GOD* of all *mercy* for the *experience* you have had of *a regenerating change.*”

I WOULD now address this *exhortation* and *charge* to every one of you, who, through *Divine grace*, hope you can say, that you are *born again*; to all who can say, that *GOD* has, of his own will, *begotten you with the word of truth*, that you may be a kind of *first-fruits of his creatures*. To you I would say, *Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness and goodness* (h). *Give thanks to the Father, who has made you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light* (i). Join your voices and your hearts in the most cheerful *hymns of praise*, whatever your different circumstances are. Let the *young* and the *old*, the *rich* and the *poor*, the *honourable* and the *mean*, rejoice together; if any may be called *poor*, who are thus *enriched*; if any may be accounted *mean*, who are thus *honoured*. *Bless the Lord at all times, let his praise be continually in your mouths* (k); and endeavour to carry along with you, through the darkest road you travel, and the bitterest sorrows you taste, *cheerfulness* in your *hearts*, and *praise* on your *tongues*; considering—how *important* the *blessing* is with which the *Lord* has favoured you;—how *few* there are who *partake* of it;—and in the midst of how much *opposition* the *Divine grace* has taken hold of your souls, and wrought its wonders of love there.

1. CONSIDER, my *Christian* friends, “how *important* this *favour* is which *GOD* has *bestowed* upon you,” in thus *begetting* you, *as a kind of first-fruits of his creatures*.

(h) Psal. xxx. 4.      (i) Col. i. 12.      (k) Psal. xxxiv. 1.

JUSTLY indeed may I say, *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be regenerated by his grace, and so be called, and that with propriety, the sons of GOD* (l)! Justly may I say to you, now you are assembled in the courts of the *Lora*, in those emphatical words of *David*, *Oh come, let us worship, and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker* (m): for it is he that has made us, and not we ourselves, with regard to this second, as well as the first creation; and we, in consequence of it, are in the noblest sense *his people, and the sheep of his pasture: enter therefore, into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name* (n).

MY brethren, it is a favour in which the *salvation of your souls* is concerned; and can that be small? or ought it ever to be thought of but with the highest emotion and enlargedness of heart? The gracious purposes of *GOD* toward his children are, to make every one of them *higher than the kings of the earth* (o), to give them more solid satisfaction than crowns and kingdoms can afford, and at length to raise them to a diadem of immortal glory. Oh what reason have you, with the *Apostle*, to say, *Blessed be the GOD and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, even to the hope of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us who are kept by the power of GOD through faith unto salvation* (p)! Survey this great privilege which *GOD*

(l) 1 John iii. 1.

(m) Psal. xcvi. 6.

(n) Psal. c. 3, 4.

(o) Psal. lxxxix. 27.

(p) 1 Pet. i. 3—5.



has already given you, this high *security*, these glorious *hopes*. Has he not brought the *beginning of glory* already into your souls? Has he not wrought you to a *filial temper*, and taught you to cry, *Abba Father* (q)? Has he not, in some measure, formed and fashioned your minds to a *meekness* to dwell with *angels* and *perfected spirits* in Heaven? So that you can now say, even with relation to *that* which you already *feel*, that you are no more *strangers and foreigners*, but *fellow-citizens with the saints*, and of the *household of GOD* (r). You are even now *the sons of GOD*, and it doth not yet appear what you shall be (s); but there is enough appears, and enough known at present, of what you shall be, and of what you are, to revive, to delight, to transport the heart.

AND is not this too, *Oh thou afflicted soul*, who art called to encounter with the most painful difficulties, *enough* to be the means of *thy support*, and to afford thee matter for thy *strong consolation*? You that are *tossed with tempests* (t), and obliged to struggle under various and long-continued burthens, have you not here a *joy* that the world can neither bestow nor impair, a *pleasure* in public and in secret duties, and a *hope* which is, *as the anchor of the soul*, both *sure and steadfast*, entering into *that within the veil* (u), and so enabling you to out-ride these storms and tempests? How glorious does your lot appear when viewed in the light of *Scripture*? You are expressly told, *All things are yours* (w): *the Lord will give grace and glory*, and no good thing will he withhold from you (x): *all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to*

(q) Gal. iv. 6.

(r) Eph. ii. 19.

(s) 1 John iii. 2.

(t) Isa. liv. 11.

(u) Heb. vi. 19.

(w) 1 Cor. iii. 21.

(x) Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

you (y); and ere long you shall see how they are so. You have a *sight by faith* of the inheritance appointed for *his children*; but he does not intend merely a *distant prospect* for you: *you shall go in, and possess that good land (z)*, and shall ere long be absent from the body, and present with the Lord (a): yea, the Lord Jesus Christ, ere long, shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (b), to be glorified and admired; in and by you in particular; when bearing the image of your heavenly Father, you shall rise far beyond this earth and all its vain anxieties, and vainer amusements, to dwell for ever in his presence. And what is there in this world that you imagine you want, which is by any means to be compared with these enjoyments and hopes? Surely, Sirs, in such a view, you should be much more than content; and should feel your inward admiration, love, and joy, bursting the bonds of silence, and tuning your voices, that have been broken by sighs into the most chearful and exalted anthems of praise: especially when you consider,

2. “How few there are that partake of this important favour, which GOD has extended to you.”

I HOPE I need not, after all I have said, remind you at large, that I intend not by any means to speak, as excluding those of different forms and different experiences; as if, in consequence of that diversity, they had neither part nor lot in this matter (c). I hope that many who are not so ready, as it were to be wished, to receive one another, are nevertheless, in this respect, received by Christ to the glory of GOD (d). Yet the temper

(y) Psal. xxv. 10.      (z) Deut. iv. 22.      (a) 2 Cor. v. 8.  
 (b) 2 Thess. i. 10.      (c) Acts viii. 21.      (d) Rom. xv. 7.

and conduct of the *generality* of mankind, even under a *Christian profession*, too plainly shews, that they have the *marks of eternal ruin* upon them: and one can form no *hope* concerning them, consistent with the tenor of the whole *word of GOD*, any other than *this*, that possibly they may hereafter *be changed* into something contrary to what they are, and *in that change* be happy.

Now that *you* are not left among the wide extended ruins of mankind, but are set *as pillars* in the building of *GOD*, is what you have been taught by the *preceding Discourses* to refer to the *grace of GOD*, which has taken and polished you to the form you now bear: or, as the *Evangelist* expresses it, in language more suitable to the subject before us, *The power, or privilege to become the sons of GOD*, is what *he gives to as many as receives him*; and it is manifest as to your *regeneration*, that *you are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD* (e): for *we love him because he first loved us* (f); and whatsoever *our attainments* be, there is no true *believer* but will be ready, with the apostle *Paul*, to say, *By the grace of GOD, I am what I am* (g).

AND now, when *these two thoughts* are taken in this comparison with each other, how deeply should they impress our minds! and how should it excite us to the most lively gratitude, to consider that when *so many* of our fellow-creatures *perish*, even under the sound of the *Gospel*; that when *they* live and die under the power of a corrupt and degenerate nature, despising all the means which *GOD* has given them of becoming better, and turning them into the occasion of greater mischief;

(e) John i. 12, 13.

(f) 1 John iv. 19.

(g) 1 Cor. xv. 10.

*GOD* should graciously *incline our hearts* to a wiser and better choice! It is indeed a melancholy reflection, that the *number* of those who are *made wise to salvation* should be *so small*; yet it is an endearing circumstance in the Divine goodness to us, that when it is *so small* we should be included in it: as no doubt it would appear to every truly religious person *in the ark*, that when but *eight souls* were saved from the deluge, he should be *one*.—*There is now a remnant*, says the Apostle, *according to the election of grace* (h): to *that grace* therefore should we render the praise. We have indeed *chosen him*; but it is in consequence of *his choosing us* (i). We have said, *The Lord is my portion*; but let us remember to *bless him*, that *he has given us that counsel* (k), in consequence of which we have been inclined to do it. Again,

3. CONSIDER, “in the midst of how much *opposition* the *grace of GOD* has *laid hold* on your souls, and wrought its wonders of *love* there.”

CHRISTIANS, look into your own *hearts*; yea, look back upon your own *lives*, and see whether many of you have not reason to say, with the great Apostle, *It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief* (l): and yet to me, *who am less than the least of all saints*, is this *grace given* (m), that I should be a regenerate adopted child of *GOD*, begotten to an inheritance of *eternal glory*.

“OH,” may *one Christian* say, “How obstinately did I *strive* against my own happiness! like a poor creature, that having received some

(h) Rom. xi. 5.      (i) John xv. 16.      (k) Psal. xvi. 5, 7.  
(l) 1 Tim. i. 15.      (m) Eph. iii. 8.

“ dangerous wound, and being delirious with a fever  
 “ attending it, *struggles* with the hand that is  
 “ stretched out to heal him. How did I *draw back*  
 “ from the yoke of GOD! How did I *trifle* with  
 “ convictions, and *put them off* from one time to  
 “ another! So that *GOD* might most righteously  
 “ have awakened *any heart* rather than *mine*.  
 “ He admonished me by his *word*, and by his *pro-*  
 “ *vidence*: he sent *afflictions*; he wrought out *de-*  
 “ *liverances* for me; and yet I went on to *harden*  
 “ *my heart*, as if I had been *afflicted*, and *de-*  
 “ *livered*, that I might *work* greater *abomina-*  
 “ *tions* (n); till *the Lord* being merciful unto  
 “ *me*, laid hold upon me, and drew me out of  
 “ *Sodom* (o).”

AND here another Christian will be ready to say  
 within himself “ If the *grace of GOD* wrought  
 “ sooner upon me when my soul was more pliant,  
 “ when my heart was comparatively tender, in *in-*  
 “ *fancy* or *childhood*, or in *early youth*; yet what  
 “ *ungrateful returns* have I since made for his  
 “ *mercy*! How *defective* have I been in those  
 “ *fruits of holiness* which might reasonably have  
 “ been expected *from me*, who have so long a  
 “ time been *planted in the house of the Lord*!  
 “ Alas for me! that I have *flourished* no more in  
 “ *the courts of my GOD* (p). How often have I  
 “ *forgotten* and *forsaken him*, how *cold* and *neg-*  
 “ *ligent* has my spirit been, how *inconstant* my  
 “ *walk*, how *indolent* my behaviour, for these  
 “ *many years* that have passed since I was first  
 “ brought into his family! *How little have I done*  
 “ in his service in proportion to the advantages I  
 “ have enjoyed! *All this* he foresaw; *all the in-*  
 “ *stances* in which my *goodness* would be as a

(n) Jer. vii. 10.

(o) Gen. xix. 16.

(p) Psal. xcii. 13.

“ morning

“ morning cloud, and as the early dew (q); all  
 “ the instances in which this perverse heart of  
 “ mine, so prone to backslide, should *turn aside*,  
 “ and start back from him *like a deceitful bow*, (r):  
 “ and yet he *has mercy* upon me, *I know not*  
 “ *why*: I cannot pretend to account for it any other-  
 “ wise than by saying, *Even so, Father, for so it*  
 “ *seemed good in thy sight* (s): *thou hast mercy*  
 “ *on whom thou wilt have mercy, and thou hast*  
 “ *compassion on whom thou wilt have compas-*  
 “ *sion* (t). I have *revolted* deeply from thee again  
 “ and again; yet thou sufferest me *not to be lost*  
 “ to this very day, nor wilt thou ever suffer it:  
 “ *Thou restorest my soul; thou ledest me in the*  
 “ *paths of righteousness for thy name’s sake* (u).  
 “ *Having therefore obtained help of GOD, I*  
 “ *continue to this day* (w): and surely goodness  
 “ and mercy shall follow me *all the days of life*;  
 “ and unworthy as I am so much as to enter into  
 “ thine house below, *I shall dwell in the house*  
 “ *of the Lord for ever above* (x). Thus, Lord,  
 “ thou makest me, as it were, *a wonder to my-*  
 “ *self*; and I hope to express my *admiration* and  
 “ my *gratitude* throughout eternal ages: and if I  
 “ can *vie* with the rest of thy *redeemed ones* in  
 “ nothing else, I will at least do it in *bowing low*  
 “ before thy throne, and acknowledging that I am  
 “ of the number of the *most unworthy*, in whom  
 “ my Lord has been pleased to *glorify* the riches  
 “ of his *mercy*, and the freedom of his *grace*.”

IN the mean time, *Christians*, I call you, often  
 to entertain yourselves with such views as these,  
 often to excite your hearts by such lively consi-

(q) Hos. vi. 4.

(r) Psal. lxxviii. 57.

(s) Mat. xi. 26.

(t) Rom. ix. 15.

(u) Psal. xxiii. 5.

(w) Acts xxvi. 22.

(x) Psal. xxiii. 6.

derations:

erations: I call you, *in the name of your Father and your Saviour*, to a *whole life of gratitude and praise*. And this leads me to add,

[2.] “IMPROVE those experiences you have had of *Divine grace*, as an *engagement to behave in a suitable manner*.”

REMEMBER the lively admonition of the *text*, that you were *begotten by him* for this very purpose, that you should be a kind of *first-fruits of his creatures*. See, therefore, that you be entirely consecrated to him, and behave as becomes *the children of GOD in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation*; being not only *harmless and blameless among them*, but *shining as lights in the world, and holding forth that word of life(y)*, by which he has begotten you to himself, and quickened you when you were dead in *trespasses and sins (z)*, GOD has now brought you into a most honourable relation: he may therefore well expect *more, much more* from you than from others. He has made you *priests to himself (a)*, and you are therefore to *offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to GOD by Jesus Christ (b)*. You were *darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord*; walk therefore *as children of light (c)*. Remember you are *not your own (d)*; your *time, your possessions, and all your capacities for service*, are the property of your *heavenly Father*.—And permit me to remind you, that if you desire to see *this doctrine of regeneration* prevail, you, who pretend to be experimentally acquainted with it, must take great care that *your behaviour* may not only be *innocent*, but *exemplary*: otherwise many will be

(y) Phil. ii. 15, 16.      (z) Eph. ii. 1. 5.      (a) Rev. i. 6.  
 (b) 1 Pet. ii. 5.      (c) Eph. v. 8.      (d) 1 Cor. vi. 19.

ready to *blaspheme the holy name* of that *GOD* (e), whom you call *your Father*; and you are like to bring a *reproach* upon the *household of faith*, which probably you will never be able to *roll away*.

CHRISTIANS, the *dignity* of our *birth* and our *hopes* is too little considered and regarded; and the reason why the world thinks so meanly of it, is because we ourselves are so insensible of its excellency. Did we apprehend it more, we should surely be more solicitous to *walk worthy of that calling wherewith we are called* (f), that *high and holy calling*. Let me therefore exhort you to endeavour to loosen your affections more from these entanglements of time and sense, which so much debase our minds, and dishonour our lives. *Yield yourselves unto GOD, as those that are alive from the dead* (g): employ with a growing zeal, to the honour of *GOD*, that *renewed life* which he has given you: *Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds* (h): and let your conversation and behaviour be like those who *feel the constraining influences of Divine love* (i); who are, not in form, but in reality, *devoted to GOD*; and who would be continually *waiting for his salvation* (k), with that temper in which you could most desire *that salvation* to find you when it comes.

[3.] LET those who have experienced the power of *Divine grace* themselves, “study to *promote the work of GOD* upon the hearts of *others*.”

LABOUR, as much as possible, to *spread this temper* which *GOD* has wrought in your hearts;

(e) 2 Sam. xii. 14.      (f) Eph. iv. 1.      (g) Rom. vi. 13.  
 (h) Rom. xii. 2.      (i) 2 Cor. v. 14.      (k) Gen. xlix. 18.



for you cannot but know that with it you spread true happiness, which alone is to be found in that intercourse with the great Author of our being, for which *this* lays a foundation, and in the regular exercise of those powers which are thus sanctified. No sooner was *Paul* converted himself, but he presently set himself to bring others to Christ, and to preach the faith which once he destroyed (l). And *David* speaks of it as the effect of God's pardoning love to him, *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee* (m).

If therefore God has called us to the office of the *ministry*, as the experience of *this change* on our own hearts will be our best qualification for our publick work (and indeed such a qualification that nothing else can supply the want of it); so it will surely excite us in a very powerful manner to apply vigorously to this care. *That which we have not only heard, but seen with our eyes, and looked upon, and handled of the word of life, let us declare to others; that their fellowship also may be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ* (n). Let us declare it in our public discourses, and never be ashamed to bear our testimony to *that grace* to which we are so much indebted; to *that grace* by which we are what we are (o). Let us warn every man, and teach every man the absolute necessity of regeneration; and expose the vanity of all those hopes which are built upon any fair outside, on any moral decency of behaviour, on any humane turn of temper, on any warm flight of imagination or emotion of passions, while the soul continues unrenewed and

(l) Gal. i. 23.

(m) Psal. li. 13.

(n) 1 John i. 1. 31.

(o) 1 Cor. xv. 10.

*insanctified.* Let us endeavour to *save men with fear, pulling them out of the fire* (p), which, if they are yet *unregenerate*, is just ready to kindle upon them. And let us be often *reviewing* our respective *flocks*, that we may see who they are, concerning whom there is reason to entertain *this fear*; that proper applications may be made to them *in private*, as well as *in public*; that joining our *admonitions* to our *sermons*, and our *prayers* and *examples* to both, we may at least *deliver our own souls* (q), if we cannot *deliver theirs*. But in proportion to the degree that such a spirit prevails in us, there is very great encouragement to hope it will be propagated to them, and that *our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord* (r).

AND let me beseech you, my beloved *hearers* in *other stations* of life, that you would not imagine *the work* is so entirely *ours* that *you* have *nothing to do with it*. Are we alone *redeemed by the blood of the Son of GOD*? Are we alone *renewed and sanctified by his grace*? Are we alone *the brethren and friends of mankind*, that the *generous care and endeavour* to promote their *eternal happiness* should be entirely *devolved upon us*? We wish so well to the *world*, and permit us to say, we wish so well to *you*, to your own *religious consolation and establishment*, to your *comfortable account*, to your *eternal reward*, that we cannot but earnestly *exhort you all*, even as many as *have tasted that the Lord is gracious* (s), that in this respect you join, not only as I trust you do, *your prayers* with ours, but that you also join *your endeavours*.

LET me particularly address *this exhortation* to *those of you* who bear any *distinguished office* in

(p) Jude, ver. 23.

(q) Ezek. xxxiii. 9.

(r) 1 Cor. xv. 58.

(s) 1 Pet. ii. 3.

the society, to whom, therefore its *religious interests* are dear by additional ties. Let me address to *those of you* whose *age and experience*, in the human and the divine life, give you something of a natural *authority* in your application, and command a distinguished *regard*. Look round about you, and observe the *state of religion* in your *neighbourhood*; and labour to the utmost to propagate not so much *this or that* particular opinion or form of worship, but *real vital Christianity* in the world. Bear your *testimony to it* on all proper occasions: be not *ashamed of it* in in your *familiar discourse*: and above all, labour to *adorn it* by your *actions*. And when you see *any under serious impressions*, as it is certain they will have a great deal *discouraging and difficult* to break through; and as *the devil and his instruments*, among whom I must necessarily reckon *licentious company*, will be doing their utmost to draw them back into *the snare of the fowler*; let me *exhort and charge you* to be as *solicitous to save*, as others are *to destroy*: I know how many *excuses* our cowardly and indolent hearts are ready to *find out* upon such an occasion; but I think those words of *Solomon*, are a sufficient *answer* to all, and I beg you would seriously revolve them; *If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart, consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, (thine, Oh Christian, with such peculiar and gracious care) doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works (t)?* He will assuredly remember, and will abundantly reward, every *work of faith*,

(t) Prov. xxiv. 11, 12.

and every labour of love (u); and we are insensible of our own *truest interest*, if we do not see how much it is concerned here.

LET me especially leave *this exhortation* with you, who are *parents and heads of families*. And one would imagine there should need but little importunity in such a case as this: one would think your own hearts should speak to you, upon such an occasion, in very pathetic language. Look upon your *dear children*, to whom you have conveyed a nature which you know to be *degenerate and corrupt*; and be earnest in your *prayers* before GOD, and your *endeavours with them*, that it may be *renewed*. And take care that you do not in this sense *despise the soul of your man-servant, or of your maid-servant* (w). GOD has brought them under your care; it may be in those years of life in which, on the one hand, they are most capable of being *instructed and seriously impressed*; and in which, on the other hand, they are also most in danger of being *corrupted*. Perhaps their *relation to you, and abode with you*, is the most *advantageous circumstance* which may occur in their whole lives: see therefore that you *seize it* with an holy eagerness; and amidst all the *charges* you give them relating to your own business, *neglect not that of the one thing needful* (x); and labour heartily to bring them to the *honour and happiness* which is common to *all GOD's servants*, and peculiar to them alone.

LET me conclude this part of my address with *intreating you all* to express your *concern for the souls of others*, by your importunate *prayers* to GOD for them. *Pray for the success of gospel or-*

(u) 1 Thess. i. 3. Heb. vi. 10. (w) Job xxxi. 13.

(x) Luke x. 42.

*dinances*; and for a *blessing* on the *labours* of all GOD's *faithful servants* throughout our whole land of one or another *denomination* in religion. Yea, *pray* that throughout the whole world, GOD would *revive his work in the midst of the years* (y); that *the religion of his Son*, by which so many souls have been *regenerated*; *refined*, and *saved*, may be *universally propagated*; and that all who are *vigorously engaged* in so important, though so *self-denying* a work, may find that *the hand of the Lord is with them*, and so *multitudes believe and turn unto the Lord* (z); so that *his sons may be brought from far*, and *his daughters from the ends of the earth* (a); that *the barren may rejoice*, and *she that did not travail with child*, may *break forth into singing*, and *cry aloud*; that *the children of nations now strangers to Christ*, may be *more than of those that are already espoused to him* (b). And then,

[4.] LET all that are *born again*, “*long for that blessed world*, where the *work of GOD shall be completed*, and we shall appear with a *dignity and glory becoming his children*.”

As for *GOD*, *his work is perfect* (c); and the time, the happy time is *approaching*, when *we shall know*, and the whole *world shall know*, in another manner than we now do, what our *heavenly Father* has intended for us in *begetting us to himself*. —Whatever our attainments here may be, *we know* at present but *in part* (d); and with whatever *integrity of soul* we now walk before GOD, *we are sanctified but in part*: and hereupon we find, and

(y) Hab. iii. 2.

(z) Acts xi. 21.

(a) Isai. xliii. 6.

(b) Isai. liv. 1.

Gal. iv. 27.

(c) Deut. xxxii. 4.

(d) 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

must expect to find, *the flesh striking against the spirit*, as well as *the spirit against the flesh*; so that, in many respects, we cannot do the things that we would (e) : and in proportion to the degree in which our nature is refined and brightened, we are more sensible of the evil of these corruptions that remain within us ; so that though we are not, in a strict propriety of speech, *carnal and sold under sin*, but do indeed delight in the law of GOD after the inward man (f), yet in the humility of our hearts we are often borrowing that pathetic complaint, *Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death* (g) ! —But let it be remembered, *Christians*, as the matter of your joy, that the struggle shall not be perpetual, that it shall not indeed be long. Look up with pleasure then, and lift up your heads ; for your redemption draweth nigh (h) : the time is approaching, when that which is perfect shall come, and that which is in part shall be done away (i). You are now the children of GOD ; but it does not appear to every eye that you are so : the world knows us not (k), nor are we to wonder at it ; for even Christ our Lord was once unknown, and appeared in so much meanness, and so much calamity, that an undiscerning and carnal eye could not have discovered who and what he was. But there is a day appointed for the manifestation of the sons of GOD (l), (as the apostle Paul most happily expresses it) ; when he will manifest them to each other, and manifest them also to the whole world. They shall not always live thus at a distance from their Father's house, and under those dis-

(e) Gal. v. 17.

(f) Rom. vii. 14, 22.

(g) Ver. 24.

(h) Luke xxi. 28.

(i) 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

(k) 1 John iii.

1, 2.

(l) Rom. viii. 19.

pensations of Providence that look so much like *disregard and neglect*: but he will *take them home, and gather them to himself*. Ere long, *Christians*, he will call these *heaven-born spirits* of yours, that are now aspiring towards him, to dwell in his immediate *presence*: he will *receive you to himself*; and you shall stand where no sinner shall have a place in the congregation of the righteous (m), and shall have an inheritance among the saints in light, the saints in holiness and glory.—Oh happy day! when dropping *this body* in the grave, we shall ascend *pure and joyful spirits* to that triumphant assembly, where there is not one vitiated affection, not one foolish thought to be found among the thousands and ten thousands of God's *Israel*! Oh blessed period of a regenerate state! Though all the schemes of the *Divine love* were to rest here, and *these bodies* were forever to be laid aside, and utterly to be *lost in the grave*; the rejoicing soul might say, "Lord, it is *enough!*" And it might be indeed *enough for us*; but it is *not enough* to answer the gracious purposes of God's paternal love. God will shew, in the most conspicuous manner, what a *family* he has raised to himself among the children of men; and therefore he will *assemble them all* in their *complete persons*, and will do it with solemn pomp and magnificent parade. He will, for this purpose, send *his own Son*, with all his holy angels (n), and will cause *the bodies* of millions of his children, that have long *dwelt in the dust*, to spring out of it at once in forms of *beauty and lustre*, worthy their relation to him. This therefore is, with beautiful propriety, called by the Apostle *the adoption, even the redemption of our body* (o); alluding to

(m) Psal. i. 5.

(n) Mat. xxv. 31.

(o) Rom. viii. 23.

the *public ceremony*, with which *adoptions* among the *ancients* were solemnly confirmed and declared, after they had been more privately transacted between the parties immediately concerned.

OH *Christians*, how reasonable is it that our souls should be *rising* with a secret ardour towards this *blessed hope*, this *glorious abode*!—It is *pleasant* for the *children of GOD* to meet and converse with one another upon earth; so *pleasant*, that I wonder they do not more frequently form themselves into little *societies*, in which, under that character, they should join their discourses and their prayers.—It is *delightful* to address to *those* that, we trust, *through grace* are *born of GOD*. No discourses are more *pleasant* than those that suit them: and could we, that are the *ministers of Christ*, reasonably hope, that we had *none but such* to attend our labours, we should joyfully confine our discourses to such subjects.—Yet while we are here, we *see imperfections in others*, we *feel them* yet more painfully *in ourselves*: and as there is no *pure unmixed society*, no *fellowship* on earth that is completely *holy and without blemish*, so there is now no *pure delight*, no *perfect pleasure* to be met with here.—Oh when shall I depart from this *mixed society*, and reach *that state* where all is *good*, all *glorious*! where I shall see *my heavenly Father*, and *all my brethren in the Lord*; and shall behold them *all* for ever *acting up* to the *character*! All *giving thanks to the Father*, who has made us meet to be *partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light* (p)! All for ever *blessing and serving the Great Redeemer*; and without one *ungenerous action*, one *reflecting word*, one *suspicious thought*, for ever *serving each other*

(p) Col. i. 12.



*in love, rejoicing in each other's happiness, and with the most prudent and stedfast application for ever studying and labouring to improve it!*

WITH the most earnest desire that you my dear brethren and friends, may at length attain to this state of perfection and glory: and with a cheerful expectation through Divine grace, that I shall, ere long, meet many of you in it; I close this Sermon, and these Discourses: not without an humble hope, that when we arrive at this blessed world, these hours which we have spent together in the house of GOD in attending them, will come into a pleasant remembrance; and that the GOD of all grace, to whose glory they are faithfully devoted, and to whose blessing they are humbly committed, will honour them as the means of increasing his family, as well as of feeding and quickening those who are already his regenerate children! Amen.

THE  
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE  
OF  
SALVATION

BY  
GRACE THROUGH FAITH.

ILLUSTRATED AND IMPROVED IN  
TWO SERMONS.

TO THE

## Church and Congregation

OF

PROTESTANT DISSENTERS

AT

ROWELL;

To whom the Substance of these SERMONS was preached;  
and at whose desire they are published.

*My dear Brethren and Friends,*

*beloved in our common Lord,*

WHEN I first preached these plain Sermons to my own congregation, which I here offer to your perusal, I was much surprised at the *request* which several of them made, that they might be *printed*; but I was yet more surprised, when, after having delivered the substance of them in *one Discourse* at *Rowell* some time after, you so unanimously and affectionately made *that request* your own. I apprehend, that though the many excellent *treatises* we have on *this subject* already,

already, might excuse my backwardness to comply with the *first motion* of this kind; yet absolutely to have refused *your repeated solicitation*, might have appeared *disrespectful* to my good friends, and perhaps have looked like some *unwillingness* to bear my testimony to this great and important doctrine, in an age in which the credit of many *evangelical truths* seem to be fallen very low.

I am really sorry I have delayed this little service so long; but it was chiefly owing to my desire of finishing my *Sermons on REGENERATION*, which indeed cost me more labour than I at first apprehended. *That* seemed a business of such *importance*, that I knew not how to interrupt it: but as they are now almost printed off, I send out *these Discourses* as a kind of *supplement to them*; and therefore they are printed in a form very fit to bind up with them. The delay is more excusable, as *SALVATION BY GRACE* is not a subject which grows out of date in a few months. This glorious *doctrine* has been the *joy* of the Church in all ages *on earth*; and it will be the *song* of all that have received it in truth, throughout the ages of eternity, and be pursued in the *heavenly regions* with ever-growing admiration and delight.

I CANNOT

I CANNOT conclude this *short address* without congratulating you on the abundant goodness of GOD to you *as a Church*, in bringing among you that worthy and excellent person \*, under whose pastoral care you are now so happily placed. I know he is a faithful witness to the *truths of the Gospel*, and rejoice in that rich abundance of *gifts and graces*, which render him so fit to state and improve them in the most advantageous, as well as most agreeable and delightful manner. I hope and believe, that *the grace* he so humbly owns his dependance upon, will add happy *success* to his labours: and I heartily pray that you and neighbouring churches may long be *happy in him*; and that GOD, who has, by such various and gracious interpositions in your favour, expressed his paternal care of you, may still delight to *dwell among you*. May he multiply you *with men like a flock*, daily adding to his Church among you *such as shall be saved!* May your souls continually *rejoice in his salvation!* And may you ever *walk worthy of the Lord*, and prove, by the integrity and purity, the spirituality and usefulness of your whole behaviour, that this *grace of GOD which brings salvation* has entered with power into your hearts; and that it is your care and delight to *improve it*,

\* The Rev. Mr. Jonathan Saunderson.

as well as to *bear of it!* To contribute to this blessed end, by this or any other attempt of cordial love and faithful respect, will be an unspeakable pleasure to,

*My dear friends,*

*Your very affectionate servant,*

*in the bonds of our common Lord,*

Northampton,

Sept. 1, 1741.

P. DODDRIDGE.

THE  
 SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE  
 OF  
*SALVATION*

BY  
 GRACE THROUGH FAITH.

—  
 SERMON I.

—  
 EPHES. ii. 8.

*For by grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of GOD.*

YOU are often, my dear brethren and friends, hearing of the duties of a religious life: and it cannot but be a pleasure to every faithful minister of Christ to observe, how willing, nay, how glad you are to hear of them; and with respect to many of you, how ready you are to practise them. But I am now coming to you with a renewed admonition on another head, which is always to be taken in connection with the former; and which, I persuade myself, will, in that view, be welcome to you all. I am to inculcate it upon you, that when you have done your utmost, how much soever that be, you should still say, that you are unprofitable

*profitable servants* (a); and endeavour to maintain a deep sense of it upon your hearts, that, as the *Apostle* admonishes the believing *Ephesians* in the words of the text, *By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of GOD.*

THE *Apostle*, in his preceding discourse, speaks of the *happy change* which the *Gospel* had made in the *state* of these poor *heathens*. He freely acknowledges, on this occasion, that the *Jews* were likewise in a *very bad state*, and if not entirely sunk into the same enormities, yet *were by nature children of wrath, even as others* (b). So that, on the whole, both were (as it might be expressed by an easy and very proper *figure*) *dead in trespass and sins* (c), indisposed for any religious sensations and actions, and far more odious to God than a putrid carcase is to men. But he adds, that *GOD* by his grace had saved them; that his unmerited goodness had begun their *salvation*, and having thus far carried it on, would undoubtedly complete it: and that he might impress their minds the more deeply with it, he repeats it again, *By grace ye are saved.* So much was the apostle *Paul* concerned to inculcate a doctrine which some are ready to look upon as *unnecessary*, and others perhaps as *dangerous*. But the *Apostle's* authority is abundantly enough to outweigh all that can be laid in the opposite scale. And it will appear from what I have further to offer, that if it had not in this view so direct a sanction from *his express testimony*, the conclusion would follow by the justest deduction of argument, from *principles* so *fundamental* to the *Gospel*, that they cannot

(a) Luke xvii. 10.

(b) Eph. ii. 3.

(c) Ver. 1. 5.



be denied without subverting its whole superstructure.

AND here, if I would treat the subject in its full extent, I might consider what we mean by *gospel salvation*: but I content myself at present with telling you, in a few words, that it implies “a *deliverance* from that ruinous and calamitous condition into which, by our *apostacy* from God, we are fallen;” and also includes “our being restored to the *Divine favour*, and all the happy effects of it, as extending not only to *time* but to *eternity*.”

I MIGHT also consider at large *the nature* of that *faith* to which the *promises of salvation* are made. But that is a subject you have heard so frequently explained; that I shall only remind you of that general account of it which has often been illustrated among you. “*Saving faith*,” for of that we are now speaking, “is such a *persuasion*, that *Christ* is the great *Messiah*, the *Son of GOD*; and the *Saviour of men*; and such a *desire and expectation* of the *blessings* he has procured under that character; as shall engage us cheerfully to *commit our souls to him* in his appointed method of *salvation*, with a *disposition* cordially to *devote ourselves* to his service in all the ways of *holy and evangelical obedience*.” The several branches of *this definition* are to be taken in their connection with each other; and then there would be no difficulty in shewing, from the whole tenor of *Scripture*, that as nothing short of this can be acceptable to God, so wherever *such a principle* really is, the soul in which it is found is intitled to all the *blessings of the covenant of grace*, and has all the security for *eternal happiness* which the *promise and oath of GOD* can give. I might also easily shew you,

that *this* is such a description of *faith*, as effectually secures the interest of *practical religion*, and guards against every *presumptuous hope* which may be formed in a soul destitute of a *principle of universal holiness*.

BUT, waving the further prosecution of these *preliminaries* to our subject, which we have occasion so often to dilate upon, I shall make it my present business,

I. To consider how we may be said to be *saved through faith*.

II. How it appears that, in consequence of this, we are *saved by grace*.

III. I SHALL examine the force of the *Apostle's* additional argument, which is drawn from the consideration, that *faith is the gift of GOD*.  
And then,

IV. I SHALL collect some *inferences* from the whole. And may GOD *write on your hearts*, as *with the point of a diamond*, them and the premises on which they are founded!

I. WE are to consider *in what sense* it may be said, that *Christians are saved through faith*.

YE *are*, says the *Apostle* [*σσωμενοι*] *the saved ones*—the persons who have already received the beginnings of *salvation*, and the certain pledge of its complete accomplishment—[*δια τας τισεις*] *through, or by means of faith*.

Now I apprehend we shall take in the *full sense* of the *Apostle's* assertion, and of *all* that it is most necessary to *believe* and *know* on this subject; if we acknowledge and remember—that *faith is absolutely necessary* in order to our *salvation*, so that *we cannot possibly be saved without it*;—and also, that every one who hath *this faith* shall undoubtedly *obtain salvation*.—But yet; that after all, a *Christian* is not to ascribe his *salvation* to  
the

the *merit* of *his faith*, but entirely to *that* of the *Lord Jesus Christ*, the great *Author* and *Finisher* of it. These are *three* very obvious remarks: none is so weak but he may easily understand them; and yet I speak very seriously, when I say they seem to me to contain *the sum* of all that is *most important* in the many *large volumes* which have been written on the subject.

1. “*FAITH* is so *absolutely necessary* to  
“our *salvation*, that we cannot possibly be  
“*saved without it.*”

So *our Lord* tells us, in the most express and emphatical forms of speech: *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins* (d): which most certainly implies *the loss of salvation*, and indeed much more. And elsewhere the incarnate wisdom and truth of GOD saith, *He that believeth not shall be damned* (e). *He shall not*, as *the Baptist* says, *see life* (f): Nay, as *our Lord* himself expresses it in the strongest terms, *He that believeth not, is condemned already*; not only on account of all those other sins, for which *the wrath of GOD*, to which he became immediately obnoxious, still *abideth upon him*; but for this additional reason of dreadful provocation, *because he hath not believed in the venerable and majestic name of the only begotten Son of GOD* (g).

WITHOUT *this faith* there is no *knowledge*, that will *save* a man, though it should be the most various, and the most exact *knowledge* of the most divine and important subjects which ever entered into a human mind. So far is it from this, that one need not scruple to say, a man might as reasonably expect to be *saved* by skill in the *mathema-*

(d) John viii. 24.

(e) Mark xvi. 16.

(f) John iii. 36.

(g) John iii. 18.

*ties*, or in *music*, as by skill in *polemical divinity*, though it were in its most essential branches, if, after all, it were no more than *mere speculation*.

AND it is no less certain, that *without this faith*, *morality* will not save a man, be it ever so unexceptionable, be it ever so exemplary. This is indeed much better than the former; but if there be nothing more, it will be fatally ineffectual to the great purpose which we have now in view. I speak not now, as you may easily imagine, of such a *continual and uniform obedience* to the Divine will, as *perfectly answers* the demands of God's original law; for no man ever has attained to *this*, or will ever, in fact, attain to it in this world: but I speak of what the world generally calls *morality*, a freedom from gross *impiety* and scandalous *vices*, yea, though attended with the practice of the *humane and social virtues*. This is indeed amiable and honourable so far as it goes; and will undoubtedly have *its reward*, in the pleasure of such a conduct, in the esteem and love of mankind, and in the possession of many temporal advantages and blessings, which, in the common course of Providence, are connected with it. But alas, it is, after all, a very partial and *imperfect thing*: and as a man may be temperate *in himself*; just, faithful, and benevolent *to men*; without having any appearance of religion *towards GOD*, or making any pretence to it: so he may have some *sense of GOD* upon his spirit, which one would think none but *an Atheist* could entirely avoid, while for *the neglect*, or it may be *the rejection* of the *Gospel*, he stands exposed to its sentence of *condemnation*. If *Christ* be not regarded as *the rock* on which we build our hopes, *the foundation is sandy*, and will be *ruinous*; and if we do not receive *Christ* by such a *faith* as I described above,

above, we offer him a most insolent affront, by pretending to put our unsanctified and rebellious hearts under his patronage.

We see then, that *without this faith* we cannot possibly *be saved*. It is the counterpart of this important truth, which we now add, when we observe,

2. THAT "every one who hath *this faith*, shall undoubtedly *be saved*."

You will here be sure to observe, that I say, "Every one who hath *this faith*," meaning *the faith* described above; which includes in it our *devoting ourselves to Christ* in the way of *holy obedience*, as an essential part of it: and consequently there can be no reason to say, as some have wildly represented the matter, "A believer shall be saved; let him live as he will;" which is either a most notorious and mischievous *falsehood*, or an express *contradiction in terms*. If the word *believer* be supposed to signify one who merely *assents* to the *truth* of the *Gospel* in *speculation*, nothing can be more *false*; and the whole *Epistle of James*, to omit a thousand particular passages of *other Scriptures*, is a demonstration of the contrary: but if it be meant, as I suppose it generally is, of a *true believer*, it is an express *contradiction*; and is as *absurd* as it would be to say a really *good man* should be *saved*, though he should at the same time be a *very bad one*. For no one can, in the *sense* described above, which is the *scriptural sense*, be a *true believer*, but one who *wills to live* in a *holy manner*; since the same *operation* of *God* upon the *soul*, which disposes it to *believe*, sanctifies *the will*, and though freely, yet effectually leads it into a prevailing *determination*, to make the *service of God* the *business of life*: or, in other words, it is plain from the whole tenor of

N Scripture,

*Scripture*, that a *saving* is also a *sanctifying faith*; but there cannot be a *sanctifying faith* in an *unholy heart*; neither can there be a *holy heart*, where there is a *wicked life*; for *the tree is known by its fruits* (h): and when we speak of *the heart*, we mean not merely *the affections*, but *the will*, the determinations of which are indeed the very *actions* of which we speak, so far as they are properly *ours*. There cannot, therefore, be a more insolent *falsehood*, than the pretence to *holiness of heart*, where *that of the life* is wanting, or to *saving faith* in the absence of both. There may indeed be an *error in the understanding* as to some precepts of *Christ*, or a *false judgment* as to some circumstance attending *ourselves*; and *that* may produce some *error in practice*: there may be instances in which the *infirmity* of human nature, and the surprise or force of a *temptation*, may betray a man into *particular miscarriages*, contrary to the *general bent* and tenor of his heart and life: but there cannot possibly be, in the conduct of any *true believer*, an *habitual, allowed, and customary disobedience* to any *one commandment* of our blessed *Redeemer*.

THIS you must first admit as a necessary *preliminary*; and when it is admitted, you may very securely build upon it *this great truth*, that “who-  
“ soever hath *such a faith as this*, shall certainly  
“ *be saved*.” Whatever *his former guilt* may have been, though ever so various, ever so long continued, ever so aggravated; though *crimes* had been committed *from which he could never have been justified by the law of Moses* (i), but would have been doomed by it to an infamous *death without mercy* (k): yet, on exerting such an act of

(h) Luke vi. 44.

(i) Acts xiii. 39.

(k) Heb. x. 28.

*faith in Christ, the believer immediately stands a justified person before GOD, previous to any good works of his own: yea, though he should die before he have an opportunity of performing any, in this case (which, if ever it happen, is, by the way, the only case in which good works are not, according to the Gospel-covenant, necessary to an actual admission into Heaven) an omniscient GOD calls the things that are not as if they were (l), and accepts those fruits of holiness which he discerned in their root or their bud, though he did not afford time for their coming to maturity. And if life be spared, the believer continuing such, continues in a state of favour and acceptance with GOD, though there may be remaining imperfections in him; and though he may see reason to complain, that he cannot do the things which he would, but that the law in his members struggles against the law of his mind (m), yet he shall finally be saved, whatever difficulties are to be broken through, and how long soever his trials may continue: and his salvation, as a believer, is as certain, from the whole current of the word of GOD, as the condemnation of the unbeliever, which we proved above. He that believeth on the Son of GOD hath everlasting life (n); he hath it already in its beginnings and earnest, and he shall ere long, rise to the complete possession of it. For Christ gives unto his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand (o). But it is of importance that I add,*

3. THAT “after all a believer is not to ascribe  
 “his salvation to the merit and excellency  
 “of this faith itself, but entirely to the merit

(l) Rom. iv. 17.

(m) Rom. vii. 23.

(n) John iii. 36.

(o) John x. 28.

“ and righteousness of the *Lord Jesus Christ*,  
 “ and the *free grace of GOD*, as manifested  
 “ in it.”

WE know it is the constant doctrine of the *New Testament*, that *GOD hath made us accepted in the beloved* (p); and that of him we are in *Christ Jesus*, who of *GOD* is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (q): so that we are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in him (r). And if we should pretend to say that we are accepted of *GOD for faith*, as the meritorious cause of that acceptance, we must contradict the whole course of the *Apostle Paul's* argument, especially in the *fourth chapter* of his *Epistle to the Romans*, where he strongly contends that *Abraham was not justified by works*, because if he were, he would have something to glory in before *GOD*, (s). Now if he had been justified by faith, as his own meritorious act, there would have been as much room for him to have gloried in that, as in any work, whether of ceremonial or moral obedience. And in the same *Epistle* he declares again, where he is speaking of the salvation of *GOD's* chosen remnant, that if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work (t): the meaning of which plainly is, that no man can at once be justified by grace, and by works: and on the same principles we may also say, no man can be justified by the merit of faith, and yet by grace. If therefore it evidently appear from the text, and our farther reasoning upon it, that our justification and acceptance with *GOD* is to be ascribed to

(p) Eph. i. 6.

(s) Rom. iv. 2.

(q) 1 Cor. i. 30.

(t) Rom. xi. 6.

(r) Rom. iii. 24.



*grace*, all pretence of *merit* in the *act* of *believing* must of course be given up.

THIS will indeed farther appear, if we consider *what it is that faith does* in order to our *being justified*. You very well know it is represented in *Scripture*, as *receiving Christ*. To as many as *received him*, to them gave he power (or privilege) to become the sons of GOD, even to them that believe on his name (u). Now it must be flagrantly absurd to talk of *resting upon an act*, whereby we do indeed *receive and rest upon another*. And therefore, however *inaccurately* some may have expressed themselves on this head, I cannot suppose that any wise and considerate *Christian* ever meant to *assert the contrary* to what I am now endeavouring to prove. We do indeed find the *Apostle* speaking of *faith* as *imputed for righteousness* (w); but it seems to me, that the most *natural sense* of that expression may be fixed, and the propriety of it may be admitted, upon the principles I have now been laying down.

ALL manner of *imputation* seems to be a *metaphor* taken from *books of account* between *creditor* and *debtor* \*. To *impute any act of sin*, or of *obedience*, is therefore properly *no other* than to *set it down to his account*: the great GOD of heaven and earth is represented in *Scripture* with humble *condescension* to our manner of acting and conceiving things, as *keeping a most exact book of records and accounts*, in which those things are registered concerning every one of us, which he will

(u) John i. 12.      (w) Rom. iv. 22.

\* From *mercantile affairs* the *metaphor* is sometimes applied to *judicial*; as *crimes to be accounted for* are also sometimes called *debts*: but when the matter is well understood in *one view*, it is easy to apply it to the *other*.

bring into that final review and survey by which our *characters and states* shall finally be *determined*. And as the most exact and *perfect obedience* is a *debt* which we owe him, as our great Creator, Benefactor, and Governor; so on the *breach of his law* we owe him some *proper satisfaction* for it. In this view we are all charged as *debtors*, poor, miserable, insolvent *debtors*, in the *book of God*: innumerable *sins* are *imputed*, or *set down to our account*; and were things to go on in this course, we should, ere long, be *arrested* by the *Divine justice*; and being found *incapable of payment*, should be *cast into the prison of hell*, to come out no more. But God, in pity to this our calamitous state, has found out a *surety* and a *ransom for us*, and has provided, a *satisfaction* in the *obedience and sufferings of his Son*; which is what we mean by *the righteousness of Christ*, or his *active and passive obedience*. It is with a gracious regard to this, to express his *high complacency* in it, and (if I may so speak) his *pleasing remembrance* of it, that all who are finally *justified and saved*, meet with *Divine acceptance and favour*: or to pursue the *metaphor* opened above, *the righteousness of Christ* is in the *book of God*, *imputed* or *set down to their account* as that by which *the debt is balanced*, and they are *entitled to such favours* as *righteous persons* might expect from God. But then, it is an invariable *rule* in the *Divine proceedings*, that this *righteousness*, or *this atonement and satisfaction of Christ* (for I think it matters but little by which of these names it shall be called) be a means of *delivering those*, and *only those that believe*. Pursuant, therefore, to the aforesaid *metaphor*, when any particular person *believes*, this is *set down to his account*, as a most important *article*, or as a *memorandum* (if I may so express it) *in the book*  
of

of GOD's remembrance, that such a one is now actually become a believer, and therefore is now entitled to justification and life by Christ. In this sense his faith is imputed for righteousness. Yet it is not regarded by GOD as the grand consideration which balances the account, or indeed as paying any of the former debt, which it is impossible it should; but only as that which, according to the gracious constitution of the Gospel, gives a man a claim to that which Christ has paid, and which GOD has graciously allowed as a valuable consideration, in regard to which he may honourably pardon and accept all who shall apply to him in his appointed way, or in the way of humble believing, as faith was described above.

THIS appears to me a just and easy view of the gospel doctrine on this head; and it is so important distinctly to understand it, that I hope you will excuse my having represented it in so many words. And this is, on the whole, the sense, in which we may be said to be saved through faith.—None can be saved without it;—and every one who has it, is intitled to salvation; but not in virtue of the merit and excellency of faith itself, but entirely for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered; or, in other words, by the imputation of his perfect righteousness, the merit of which is graciously applied to this or that particular person upon his believing: so that upon this he is justified; and by the general tenor of the Gospel, is to be looked on as a righteous person; or as one who shall, on the whole, be treated as such, and shall, ere long, be publicly declared righteous before the assembled world, and be freed from all the remainders of that penalty which sin has brought upon us: and though, for wise and good reasons, he be for a while continued under some of them, the time of

*that continuance is so short, and his succeeding happiness so lasting, that the former being, as it were, swallowed up by the latter in the all-comprehending views of GOD, he is spoken of by him as if his justification and salvation were already complete. We are saved through faith.—But having stated this, the method I proposed leads me,*

II. To shew, that in consequence of our being thus saved through faith, we may properly be said to be saved by grace.

Now the connection between these will appear very evident; if we consider—that *faith* cannot make any atonement to the offended justice of GOD, so as to give us any *legal claim* even to the pardon of our sins upon the account of it:—much less can it confer any obligation upon GOD to bestow on us *eternal blessedness*;—nor would there indeed have been any room to mention *faith* in this whole affair, if GOD had not contrived such a method of salvation, and done that to effect it, which none but himself could have done.

1. “*FAITH* cannot make any atonement to  
“ the offended justice of GOD, so as to give us  
“ any *legal claim* even to the pardon of our  
“ sins upon the account of it;” so that if we  
are saved through faith, we must, in this view,  
acknowledge it to be by grace.

THE law of so wise, so great, and so venerable a Sovereign as the blessed GOD is, must of course suppose some awful sanctions, some solemn denunciations of wrath and vengeance on those who pre-umptuously transgress it. And it is certainly the part of GOD, as a wise, holy, and gracious legislator, to maintain its honour when it has been violated; and not to treat an offending creature as innocent and righteous, without some provision made for the satisfaction of his injured justice: in  
the

the demand of which *satisfaction* GOD does not express any thing of a *sanguinary* and *revengeful disposition*: far be so blasphemous a thought from us! But he displays a steady regard to *that order*, which, as the *Great Sovereign*, it becomes him, for the benefit of his subjects, as well as for the glory of his own name and government, to preserve in the *moral world*, i. e. among his reasonable creatures. Some ample and honourable *amends* must therefore be made, in order to the discharge of a guilty and condemned criminal. And is *faith* such an *amends*? Take it in its utmost extent, as an *assent* to whatever he proposes, and a *submission* to whatever he demands, to the very utmost of our capacity, *this*, in our present circumstances, is but *our duty*, and would have been so, had we never offended him: and the *performance of it*, with whatever readiness, exactness, and constancy, *cannot* possibly *atone* for the *violation of it* in times past; as the *payment* of what, *for the future*, becomes *due* to any *creditor*, cannot discharge a *debt* formerly contracted, and remaining *unbalanced* upon account: therefore it is, that we read of *Christ's being made a sin-offering for us*, though he himself *knew no sin*, that we might be made the *righteousness of GOD* in him (x); i. e. that we might be *accepted of GOD as righteous*, being considered as, *by faith*, united to him, and interested in *his righteousness and grace*. In testimony of which, GOD expressly requires that every *sinner* should sue out his pardon *in Christ's name* (y); and should present himself before him as one that has *obtained redemption through Christ's blood*, and is *accepted in the beloved* (z), *who of GOD is made unto us righteous-*

(x) 2 Cor. v. 21. (y) Luke xxiv. 47. (z) Ephes. i. 6, 7.

ness (a): a scheme utterly inconsistent with *that* of our being *justified* and *saved* by any *merit* or *excellence* in *faith*, considered as an *act* of *atonement* made by us, by which the guilt of our offences is cancelled, and our pardon bought by us. It is yet more apparent,

2. THAT “*faith* can confer *no obligation* upon “*GOD* to bestow on us *eternal blessedness*,” in which view also our *salvation* through it must appear to be *by grace*.

THAT *eternal blessedness* is designed for every *believing* soul, is, through the Divine goodness, as apparent, as that *faith* itself is ever required in Scripture. But can we say of *eternal life*, that it is *the wages* of *faith*? I much question whether it could have been *claimed* as *wages* due to us on account of our *obedience*, had that *obedience* been *perfect* in its kind and degree: nor do I think it could, with any confidence, have been *expected*, unless *GOD* had been pleased, by a gracious *covenant*, to *promise* it: otherwise, all that the *completest* *obedience* could have *claimed*, would only have been *favour continued*, or at most *favour increasing*, during the time in which we continued to *behave* ourselves *well*. Much less then can we imagine, that when we had once *broken the law* of *GOD*, *faith*, though, for the future, attended with the most *perfect efficacy*, and productive of the most *steady* course of *obedience* in all after-instances, could give us any such *claim*. Least of all then, can we have any room to pretend it, on account of a *faith* which operates in so *imperfect* a manner, and produces an *holiness* so sadly *defective* in many instances, as we must acknowledge our own to be. That we should be admitted into

(a) 1 Cor. i. 30.

the glorious presence of GOD, and be fixed in a state of immutable security and felicity, where sin and sorrow shall no more invade us; but where *GOD will appoint for us salvation itself for walls and bulwarks* (b), is so glorious a triumph of the Divine goodness, that the soul which knows itself, and attentively looks on this *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, is astonished and humbled in the views of it, and finds it no small stretch of *faith*, to be able to *believe*, that GOD does indeed *intend it* for so sinful a creature: so far is the *believer* from arrogating any thing of this kind to himself, as if *his own faith* had any degree of *merit* or *excellence* proportionable to it. But we must observe once more, to complete the argument,

3. THAT “there had been *no room to mention*  
 “*faith* at all in this affair, had not *GOD* gra-  
 “ciously *contrived* such a *method of salva-*  
 “*tion*, and *done that* to effect it, which none  
 “but himself could do.”

*FAITH* receives our Lord Jesus Christ; it is its great *office*, and its great *glory* to do it. But how could it have *received him*, unless he had been *given*? and how could he have been *given* in this view, but by the *appointment* of the *Father*, in concurrence with *his own free* and most gracious *consent*?—*faith* apprehends and *submits* to the *gospel plan* of *salvation* by the *obedience* and *sufferings* of the *Son of GOD*; yea, it not only *submits* to it, but *rejoices* and *glories* in it. But who could have *exhibited*, who could have *contrived*, who could have *executed* such a *plan*, unless it had been formed and determined in the *counsels* of *eternal love*?—Admit *faith* to be ever so voluntary, and so far as is possible to a creature, ever so inde-

(b) Isai. xxvi. 1.

pendent an act, can we any of us say, that there was so much *merit* and *excellency* in that *act*; or in any of its subsequent *fruits*, that *GOD* upon the *foresight of it* should say; “These creatures, guilty  
 “ and condemned as they appear, will be so *ready*  
 “ *to receive* the intimations of my *will*; that they  
 “ will fully *deserve* that I should *save them* at any  
 “ rate; they will *deserve* even that *my Son* should  
 “ become *incarnate*, and *die* as a *sacrifice*, to make  
 “ way for their happiness.” Can any of you, Sirs, imagine *this* to have been *the case*? Or can you hear it even *supposed*, without finding something shocking in the very representation of it? The blessed *Paul*, I am sure, had very *different views* when he said, *GOD hath predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved* (c). - And the apostle *John* had *other notions* of it, when he said, full as his gracious heart was of the most lively sentiments of gratitude and zeal, *Herein is love, not that we loved GOD, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins* (d).

THESE arguments would prove, that our *salvation through faith* is *by grace*, even though it could not be added, that *this faith is the gift of GOD*. How much more convincing then must the *conclusion* be, when *that consideration* is added to the rest!

BUT as the illustration of *this*, which was the *third general* we mentioned, will require more time than can properly be allowed to the remainder of *this Discourse*, I will reserve it to *another*; and conclude for the present, with *exhorting you se-*

(c) Eph. i. 5, 6.

(d) 1 John iv. 10.

riously



riously to *examine*, whether you have this *principle of faith* in your hearts, *without which your salvation is in present circumstances an impossible thing, and with which it is inviolably secure.*

IT is a melancholy, but most obvious truth, that *all men have not faith* (e). There are thousands and ten thousands under the gospel, with regard to whom its *ministers* have reason to complain, *Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed* (f)? On whom has its *power* been so exerted, as to *conquer* the natural incredulity and obstinacy of their hearts? Are you, Sirs, of *that number*, or of the number of those who, as the *Scripture* expresses it, *have believed through grace* (g)? It is the *question* on which your *eternal state* will turn at last; and therefore you would do well to *examine it* now. And I would beseech you to endeavour to trace it—in its *production*—and in its *effects*—or, in other words, to enquire—how it has been *introduced* into your minds—and how it has *worked* there.—You may surely discover it, in the *one* or in the *other*, if it be your prevailing character; and I hope many of you will be able to discover it in *both*.

(1.) CAN you trace *faith* “in its *production* and *advance* in your souls?”

Do you recollect any time in which you had *no thoughts* of the *Lord Jesus Christ*, and *no workings of affection* towards him? And has there been *any alteration* in your minds in this respect? All true *faith in Christ* is founded on a *conviction of sin*, and of the *misery* to which you are exposed by it. Have you indeed been brought to *this conviction*? Have you *heard*, and (if I may be allowed the expression) have you *felt* yourselves *condemned* by

(e) 2 Thess. iii. 2.

(f) Isai. liii. 1.

(g) Acts xviii. 27.

the sentence of a *righteous*, a *holy*, yea, of a *merciful GOD*? And have you, by *that apprehension*, been stirred up to *cry for pardon and deliverance*? You have heard of *Christ* under the character of a *Saviour*; but I put it to your consciences, have you seriously *viewed him* under that character? and from a full persuasion of his *correspondency*, when considered in this view, to all the *necessities* of your case, and all the *exigencies* of your souls, have you entered into any *treaty with him*? Recollect it seriously. Have you ever presented yourselves before *GOD*, with an humble and cordial *regard to Christ*? And do you know what it is secretly and sincerely to *repose your souls* upon the *merit* of his *obedience*, and the *efficacy* of his *blood*, with humble *acknowledgment* of your *own guilt*, with entire *resignation* of your *own righteousness*, as utterly *unworthy* of being mentioned before *GOD*, and with a cordial and joyful *resolution* to *devote yourselves* to his *service* as long as you have any being, and through *time* and *eternity* to testify your *gratitude* by a constant series of *obedience*?

If you can trace such a *process of thought* and *experience* as this, you have great reason to conclude, that you experimentally know *what faith is*; and that *through faith* you are *in the way to salvation*. Yet it is always to be remembered, that *faith is to be shewn by its works* (h). Give me leave, therefore, farther to enquire,

(2.) WHETHER you can trace “the genuine  
“effects of it in your hearts and lives?”

You *believe in Christ*: but has that *faith in him* produced a continued and habitual *intercourse with him*? I speak not of an *intercourse* absolutely *uninterrupted*; for that the present state of human

(h) James ii. 18.

life will not admit. But has it produced *frequently repeated and direct acts of application to him, and converse with him?* One can hardly imagine how it is possible for a true *believer* to suffer *these* to be long, and *often intermitted*; especially to such a degree, that *days and weeks and months* should pass, as if all the business between *Christ* and *his soul* were quite finished, and *he* and *his Lord* were parted by consent, till *death*, or some very urgent and extraordinary *circumstance*, renewed the *interviews* between them.—I would ask farther, has *this faith* to which you pretend, produced a *resemblance to Christ's example*, and an *obedience to his precepts* in the course of your lives? You know that *true faith* is *operative*; and you know, in the general, the *genius and design* of *Christianity*. I would demand of your consciences how far you comply with it? Is your *temper and conduct* in the main *such*, as you well know, *our Lord* intended, that the *temper and conduct* of *his people* should be? Is it devout and spiritual, just and charitable, sober and temperate, humble and cautious? Is *religion* your care, and do you maintain an *habitual watchfulness* over yourselves; that your behaviour may be agreeable and honourable to your profession?—Once more, are you ardently pursuing *greater attainments* in the *Christian temper and life*, so that you may be spoken of as *hungering and thirsting after righteousness* (i)?

IF you can answer such *enquiries* as these in the affirmative, you have a great deal of reason to hope that *faith is yours*, and *salvation is yours*. But if you cannot so answer them, a *confident assurance that you shall be saved*, is so far from being *faith*, that it is *presumption and folly*; and far from being

(i) Matth. v. 6.

any *security* to you, will only prove *adding sin to sin*. That *confidence*, by whatever name you may affect to call it, is indeed *unbelief*: *unbelief of GOD's threatenings*, while it vainly pretends to *trust his promises*: For he hath not more expressly said, that *he who believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life*; than he has added, that *he who is disobedient to the Son \**, shall not see life (k). While *sin reigns in your life*, and thereby appears to *reign in your heart*, did you pretend a *revelation from Heaven* as to the *truth of your faith*, every wise man would conclude that pretended *revelation* was a *delusion*; and that how solemnly soever it might be ascribed to *the Spirit of truth and holiness*, it really proceeded from *the father of lies*.

Excuse the *plainness* with which *fidelity to GOD*, and *to you*, obliges me to speak on this head; and be assured, that it proceeds from a real concern to secure the honour of *that glorious doctrine of SALVATION BY GRACE*, which I have now been labouring to establish, and the *demonstration and improvement* of which I shall farther pursue in the *ensuing Discourse*.

\* Ο απειθων τω υιω.

(k) John iii. 36.

## SERMON II.

FAITH is the GIFT of GOD.

EPHES II. 8.

*For by grace ye are saved through faith: and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of GOD.*

**I**N the works of *nature* many of those things, which to a superficial eye may appear as *defects*, will on a careful enquiry be found to be *marks* of consummate *wisdom*, and kind *contrivance*. And on the same principle, I confess, I have often thought there is reason to be thankful for the very *inaccuracies* of *Scripture*. The *haste* in which the Apostle *Paul* was, by the multiplicity of his affairs, obliged to write, has given us an opportunity of viewing *more of his heart* in his *epistles*, than we might perhaps have seen if he had frequently reviewed and corrected them. Those *parentheses* in particular, and those *repetitions*, which render the *style* less elegant, and the *sense* sometimes less conspicuous, do nevertheless shew to greater advantage, how deeply *those thoughts* were impressed upon his mind which he introduces in such a manner. And of this *the words* which I have now been reading are *an instance*. In the course of his preceding argument, a few *verses* before, while he is telling the *Ephesians*, the *GOD*  
*who*

who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved them, even when they were dead in sins, had quickened them together with Christ; he adds, by way of parenthesis, *By grace ye are saved* (a): and when he goes on to say, they were raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, he further tells them, that this was with an intention; *that in the ages to come God might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Jesus Christ* (b): nay, his heart was so full of the subject of *grace*, free and astonishing *grace*, that as if all this was not enough, by a most glorious and edifying *tautology* (if I may be allowed so to speak) he inserts the words of my text, *By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of GOD.*

I HAVE already shewn you, from these words, *in what sense* we may be said to be *saved through faith*:—and I have also proved, that in consequence of this it is evident we must be *saved by grace*; since *faith* being incapable of *satisfying* the demands of GOD's injured *justice*, can much less *merit* such a recompence as *eternal life*; nor can it indeed have any *efficacy*; or any *place* at all in this affair, otherwise than by GOD's *free constitution* and *gracious appointment*.—I then conclude with observing, that this argument would have a convincing force, even though *faith* were ever so entirely *an act of our own*; or that we had no more support or assistance from GOD in forming and exerting it, than we have in any of the common actions of natural life. But I am now to shew, that even *this* is not the case; but that a

(a) Ver. 4, 5.

(b) Ver. 6, 7.

*new proof* of our being saved by grace arises from considering,

III. THE argument which the *Apostle* suggests in the close of the *text*; that even *this faith is not of ourselves; but it is the gift of GOD.*

I AM sensible that some endeavour to invalidate and supersede all this part of the argument, by giving *another turn* to this *last clause*, referring it in general to our *salvation by faith*, as if it had been said, “Our being thus saved by grace through *faith* (as I have just now said) is not of ourselves, but it is the gift of GOD.” But I apprehend that an impartial reader would not be willing to allow of *this interpretation*; which makes the *latter clause* a mere *repetition* of what was said before, and a *repetition* of it in less proper and expressive words. None could imagine, that our being saved through *faith* was of ourselves; or that we ever could ourselves constitute and appoint such a *way of salvation*, which was indeed fixed so long before we had a being. But *faith* being really *our own act*; it was highly pertinent to observe, that the *excellency* of *this act* is not to be arrogated to ourselves, but is to be ascribed to GOD. All that are acquainted with the genius of the *original* must acknowledge *this is a construction* which it will very fairly admit. And we shall prove, in the process of this argument, that *other Scriptures* expressly declare the truth, which *this interpretation* makes to be the meaning of the words.

FAITH may be called *the gift of GOD*—as it is GOD that *reveals* the great objects of *faith*—that *brings the mind* to attend to them—that *conquers* our natural aversion to the *gospel method* of salvation, and so *implants faith* in the soul;—and  
also

also as it is he that *carries it on* to more perfect degrees, and *improves* its vigour and activity.

1. *FAITH* may be called *the gift of G: D*,  
 “ as it is *GOD* who *reveals* the great objects  
 “ of *faith*.”

*HUMAN reason* is but weak and imperfect, and has indeed interwoven the traces of its own *weakness* with many of the fairest monuments of its *strength*. Even in its most advanced state, among the most *learned* and *polite nations* of antiquity, it is deplorably evident how far it was from discovering the several branches of *natural religion* in its purity, extent, and order. And to speak freely it shone more brightly in almost every other view than in that which is its noblest end: I mean what relates to *GOD* and *immortality*. It has indeed produced many admirable *poems*, and composed many moving *orations*: it has woven many exquisite *threads* of *argument*, with which the subtlest disputants have intangled each other, and have often intangled themselves: and much more useful it has been, in adorning the face of the *earth*, in subduing the *sea*, in managing the *winds*, and meteing out the *heavens*. But this rich *vein* of *knowledge*, this *mine* of holy and *divine treasure*, lies too deep for *human discovery*.—If any ask, *Where shall this wisdom be found, and where is the place of this understanding* (c)? It must be granted, that *it is a path, which the vulture's eye hath not seen* (d): *man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living*. *The depth* of human science says, *It is not in me: and the sea, with all the most improved countries that lie upon it, must say, it is not with me* (e): for *eye hath not seen, nor*

(c) Job xxviii. 12.

(d) Ver. 7.

(e) Ver. 13, 14.  
ear



ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which GOD hath prepared for them that love him (f). There were no principles on which to proceed, in the investigation of this important knowledge: none could ever have learned, that GOD had formed *counsels of mercy and peace* towards apostate creatures: none could ever, on *natural principles*, have discovered the very *existence* of the Son, and the Spirit. How much less then could they have known, or imagined, that the *Son of GOD* should have undertaken to *redeem us* with his own precious blood; and the *Spirit* be sent to manage affairs, as the great agent of the Redeemer's kingdom; in consequence of whose gracious acts and influences *the soul* should be savingly *renewed and transformed*; and then carried on with a growing pace in the way to Heaven, till it was *received* to the *separate state* of holy and triumphant spirits at death, and to *complete glory* at the *resurrection of the dead*? All the men upon earth could never, by their own natural sagacity, have discovered *any of these particulars*; how much less then could the *whole system* have been discovered?—But *GOD* himself has graciously *revealed them by his Spirit* (g): and as he was pleased *miraculously* to interpose to give *this revelation* to the world; so he has interposed by remarkable *providences* to send to us such *clear notices* of it; and to send *these notices* so early too, as to throw the *prejudice of education* among us *this way*, rather than the contrary. And considering how powerful *those prejudices* are, and how many have fallen into ruin by them, *this* will appear no small matter to a considerate person; especially when he surveys the

(f) 1 Cor. ii. 9.

(g) 1 Cor. ii. 10.

state of *the world* in general, and considers how *few nations and countries* there are in which *this* is the case; and in what various forms of most pernicious and destructive *errors* the *generality* of mankind are *trained up* from their tenderest infancy.—I would conclude *this head* with observing, that “whatever *particular advantages* we have “enjoyed, they are all to be traced up to the *dis-* “*tinguishing goodness* of *GOD* to us.” If wise and pious *parents*, if skilful, zealous, and faithful *ministers*, have been the *instruments* of working *faith* in our souls, *this also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts* (h); who taught *their minds* to conceive, and *their lips* to speak, and who opened *our hearts* to receive instruction. And this leads me to add,

2. THAT as *GOD* reveals the great *objects of faith*, so “it is he also that *inclines the mind* “to *attend* to them:” on which account *faith* may be further said to be *the gift of GOD*.

THE great *objects of faith* are, and by their nature must be, to us invisible; while *those of sense* strike so strongly on the mind, that it is no wonder we are apt often to forget the other. And when a man is conscious to himself that the *first recollection* and acquaintance with them must be *painful*, and must be attended with remorse and fear, how necessary soever *that pain* may be, it is too natural to *draw back* from it. And we may easily conceive that *Satan*, the great enemy of men’s eternal happiness, will exert all his artifices to *prejudice* them against it, and to *divert* them from it.

(h) Isai. xxviii, 29.

ACCORDINGLY I make no doubt but that *many* of you, and especially *young persons*, have experienced this. You have found, that when you first began to be sensible you were *in a lost* and miserable *state*; when you began first to hearken to the tidings of *deliverance by Christ*; and to enquire into the *way of salvation* exhibited in the *Gospel*; many circumstances arose to *take off your attention* from them. You found *Satan* endeavouring to *steal away* the good seed *out of your hearts*, lest you should believe, and be saved (i); and joining the efforts of various of his instruments, to *allure*, or to *testify you from religion*. To what then will you *ascribe it*, that you have been able to *break through* all these *snares*? To what will you *ascribe it*, that when you had perhaps laboured to *stifle convictions* in your own hearts, they have *returned upon you* with greater power than before? and though you have endeavoured all you could to *shift them off*, yet you have found them every where *pursuing you*; keeping your eyes from sleep during the *watches of the night*, or breaking in upon you in the *morning* with the returning light; or following you perhaps into those scenes of business, or of vain conversation, to which you have fled as a refuge from them? You must undoubtedly *ascribe it* to the *GOD of the spirits of all flesh*, that you have thus been taught to *consider your ways* (k); and that *your spirits* have been so deeply *impressed with concerns* which multitudes, whom the world reckons among the *wisest* of mankind, are entirely thoughtless about, and which, perhaps, you yourselves were once among the first to despise.

(i) Luke viii, 12.

(k) Hag. i. 5.

3. *FAITH* may be further called *the gift of GOD*, as “it is he that *conquers the natural aversion* which there is in men’s hearts to the *gospel method of salvation*, when it comes to be understood and apprehended.”

THAT *method* is so wise, so rational, and so gracious; that one would imagine every reasonable creature should embrace it with delight. Yet the degenerate heart of man draws its strongest *objections* against it, from *those things* which are really its greatest *glory*.

It is the *way of humility*, and of *holiness*: and a haughty and licentious heart rises against it in each of these views. To be stripped of all the *pride* of human nature, to stand *guilty* and *helpless* before GOD, and in an entire renunciation of all *self-dependance*, to seek *righteousness* and *strength* in another, is, to spirits naturally so *arrogant* as ours, a *hard saying* scarcely to be borne: to give up our own *wills* to be checked and controuled in all things by the Divine authority, to engage in an habitual *course of self-denial*, to *crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts* (l), is *hard* indeed. No wonder, therefore, if we are taught in *Scripture* to acknowledge the *agency* and *interposition* of a *Divine hand*; when this is wrought in us; when we not only feel some *tendency* of soul towards it, some transient and ineffectual *purpose*, but when a *permanent principle* of this kind is implanted in our hearts, so that our lives are governed by it. Hence the *Scripture* speaks of those to whom it is *given*, not merely to hear of *Christ*, but to *believe in him* (m); and pathetically describes *the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe*, as an *energy of mighty power*, like that which

(l) Gal. v. 24.

(m) Phil. i. 29.

wrought in Christ when GOD raised him from the dead (n): when he lay a cold corpse in the grave, his blood drained out, and his side pierced to the very heart, think of that mighty energy which then re-animated your Lord; and you see an emblem of that which raises us to a divine life, and enables us to act that life in faith on a crucified and a risen Redeemer. Thus, as it is said in one place, that GOD gave to the Gentiles repentance unto life (o); it is also said in another, that he purified their hearts by faith (p); plainly implying, that there is in both an interposition of Divine power. Now certainly, if he implants this principle in our hearts; that salvation, which he has connected with it, must be entirely of grace: which will further appear, if we consider,

4. THAT “it is GOD who carries on this blessed work, and maintains this divine principle.”

It is through much tribulation and danger, through much opposition and difficulty, that the Christian must enter into the kingdom of GOD (q). When he begins to set sail heaven-ward, the prince of the power of the air endeavours to raise those storms, which shall, if possible, oblige him to make shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience (r): nevertheless he must endure to the end, or he cannot be saved (s). And how is he enabled thus to persevere? Surely it is through the continued communications of Divine grace to him; or as the Apostle with admirable propriety expresses it, he obtains mercy of the Lord to be faithful (t). It is by this means that he obtains the victory:

(n) Eph. i. 19, 20.

(o) Acts xi. 18.

(p) Acts xv. 9.

(q) Acts xiv. 22.

(r) 1 Tim. i. 19.

(s) Matt. xxiv. 13.

(t) 1 Cor. vii. 25.

and while he overcomes the world, and conquers the remaining corruptions of his heart, he must still humbly own, that in the one and the other instance he is *more than a conqueror through him that loved him* (u). In short, he will be ready to acknowledge, that *having obtained help of GOD, he continues to this day* (w); and will mark out, as it were, the several stages of his journey, by *erecting at the end of each a stone of remembrance and thankfulness; and saying, Hitherto the Lord has helped me* (x).

AND now, my friends, you may see the evidence of this great truth, that *by grace we are saved through faith*, appearing in its complete light: and permit me once more to repeat the *summary* of the whole argument, that it may be more deeply, and more distinctly, impressed upon your minds—How much soever *faith* may be supposed to be *our own unassisted act*, so far as the act of any creature is *unassisted*, it could *make no atonement* to the injured justice of GOD,—and much less *confer any obligation* upon him to *bestow* on us *eternal life*;—nor had there been *any room to mention it* at all in the whole affair, if *GOD* had not *contrived* such a *method of salvation*, and *done that to effect it*, which none but himself could do:—much more will it appear to be *of grace*, when we add, that *faith itself is the gift of GOD*,—as he *reveals* the great objects of it;—as he *brings the mind to attend to* them;—as he *conquers the natural aversion* of the heart to the *Gospel method of salvation*;—and *carries on* the work of *faith* in the soul, till it ends in *complete salvation*. It now remains,

(u) Rom. viii. 27.

(w) Acts xxvi. 22.

(x) 1 Sam. vii. 12.

IV. THAT I conclude with some obvious, but useful *inferences* from the whole.

AND here now, if it is *by grace* that we are saved through faith, then certainly we may infer from hence,—that we have *no reason to glory*,—but should be *thankful* for the *grace by which we are saved*;—that we must wholly be *without excuse*, if we neglect this *method of salvation*;—that we should labour therefore that our *faith* may be *increased and strengthened*;—that even the *weakest* have encouragement *to seek*, and to *hope for salvation* in this way;—and finally, that we should *take great heed* that we do not bring a *reproach* upon this doctrine, by an *irregular and licentious behaviour*.

1. IF we are saved by grace through faith, then it is certain that “we have no reason to glory.”

IF it were possible a person should perform the most complete and *perfect obedience*, and so were *justified by works*, it is but only in a *limited sense* he would have *any thing* of which to glory before GOD; since even *he* must acknowledge, that it is GOD who works in him, both to will, and to do (y), and by his gracious influences renders him capable of both: however he, in such a case, may in some measure glory, that *he has done his best*, and that *his behaviour* has all that *merit*, or all that *excellence*, which the behaviour of a creature in his circumstances could possibly have. But when the *ungodly* are *justified* (z), when we who have been *transgressors* in ten thousand aggravated instances, are *saved by grace through faith*, of what shall we glory? Shall any of us glory that we are *saved by another*, when even our *receiving*

(y) Phil. ii. 13.

(z) Rom. iv. 5.

that *other* is what *GOD* hath brought us to by the renewing and sanctifying influences of his *grace* upon our hearts? When we had corrupted and undone ourselves, and were under a sentence of condemnation and wrath, we have *embraced the Gospel*, that is, we have accepted the riches of the Divine liberality and goodness exhibited in it: but shall a *beggar* glory in having stretched out his hand to receive an *alms*? especially if it were given him by a generous and skilful *physician*, who before he bestowed *that alms*, had cured him of a disease, by which that very hand, now stretched out to him, had been benumbed and disabled? Let us rather enter into that just and amiable reasoning of the Apostle *Paul*, and say as he does, of him, i. e. of *GOD*, *are we in Christ Jesus, who of GOD is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: let no flesh therefore glory in his presence; but he that glories, let him glory in the Lord* (a). And this leads me to infer,

2. THAT we have a great deal of reason to “be  
“ *thankful*, and to adore the *grace by which*  
“ *we are saved.*”

IF it is *GOD* who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, that has shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of *GOD* in the face of *Jesus Christ* (b), let us bless the *Lord* who has shewed us this light, and with a cheerful gratitude let us bind the sacrifice, as it were with cords unto the horns of the altar (c). Let us bless the *GOD* and *Father* of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, the *Father* of mercies, and the *GOD* of all comfort (d), who has blessed us with all

(a) 1 Cor. i. 29—31.

(b) 2 Cor. iv. 6.

(c) Psal. cxviii.

27. 2 Cor. iv. 3.



*spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ: according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love (e). I would call upon you this day to do it; to join with me, and with each other, in it. Praise the Lord all ye his saints; be thankful unto him, and bless his name (f)! Praise him, who graciously purposed your salvation, and predestinated you to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself (g)! Praise him, who rendered this purpose effectual, and wrought it out by a high hand and outstretched arm! Praise him, who gave his only son to be a sacrifice for you, and to bring in everlasting righteousness (h)! Praise him, who sent his Spirit, as the great agent in his Son's kingdom, to bring the hearts of sinners to a subjection to the Gospel, and gently to captivate them to the obedience of faith! Praise him, who has revealed this glorious Gospel to you at so great a distance of time and place! Praise him, who has impressed your hearts with a disposition to regard it! Praise him, who has subdued your prejudices against it! Praise him, who having implanted faith in your souls, continues even to this day to animate and support it!—Let all ranks and ages join in this chearful song! Praise ye the Lord, you that are rich in temporal possessions, if you have been enabled to renounce the world as your portion, and to triumph over it by this Divine principle! Praise him, you that are poor in this world, if you are rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which GOD has promised to them that love him (i)! Praise him, you that are chearful and*

(e) Eph. i. 3, 4.

(h) Dan. ix. 24.

(f) Psal. c. 4.

(i) Jam. ii. 5.

(g) Eph. i. 5.

rigorous, and capable of rendering him that active service which may speak the gratitude of your hearts towards him! Praise him, you that are *weak and languishing*, since *his strength is made perfect in your weakness* (k), and your *infirmities* illustrate the force of *that faith* which he has wrought in you! Praise him, ye *youths*, who with this guide and companion of your way, are *setting forth* in the journey of life with courage, and *lifting up your feet* in his paths! Praise him, ye *aged saints*, who stand on the borders of eternity, and live in a daily expectation that you shall *receive the end of your faith, in the salvation of your souls* (l). — Begin that work now, in which you are all so soon to join! Break forth into one joyful *anthem*, and sing, “*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us* (m), *but to thy name be all the praise of that salvation, which thou hast already begun in our souls, and which thy faithfulness has engaged to complete.*” Again,

3. IF we are saved by grace through faith, then certainly “they who neglect such a *method of salvation*, are highly *inexcusable.*”

To be not only delivered from everlasting condemnation and ruin, but raised to the presence and enjoyment of GOD—above, is so glorious an *exchange*, so important a *prize*, that it would be worth while to secure it at any imaginable rate, whatever was to be resigned, whatever to be endured, for it. But it is certain, that the more gracious the proposal and offer is, the baser and more criminal will the refusal be. Had some *hard matter* been proposed, *should we not have done it?* and *how much rather*, when the Divine oracle

(k) 2 Cor. xii. 9.

(l) 1 Pet. i. 9.

(m) Psal. cxv. 1.

only says, *Wash and be clean* (n) ? *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved* (o). — *To you, my brethren, even to all that hear me this day, is the word of this salvation sent, and brought* (p). Let me address you, therefore, in the language of the *Apostle*, and say, *Take heed that you receive not the grace of GOD in vain: and let me add, Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation* (q). Dare not to *trifle* in a business of such consequence; lest if you should *neglect* it even till *to-morrow*, there should be no room to repeat that declaration then. That *GOD* should ever offer salvation at all, and especially in such a method, is astonishing condescension and love: and every instance in which that offer is renewed, is a renewed miracle of mercy. But the day of the *Divine* patience has its limits; and if you *trifle* beyond those limits, and know not that the goodness and long-suffering of *GOD* lead to repentance, this injured mercy will plead against you, and it will appear you have treasured up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of *GOD* (r).

4. IF we are saved through faith, then surely  
 “ we should labour, that this blessed principle  
 “ may be strengthened in our souls.”

THE greater evidence we have of the sincerity of our faith, the greater assurance may we justly have of our interest in the *Gospel* salvation; and the stronger our faith is, the clearer will the evidence of its truth be. Let us therefore emulate the character of our father *Abraham*, and make it our care, like him, to be strong in faith, there-

(n) 2 Kings v. 13.      (o) Acts. xvi. 31.      (p) Acts xiii. 26.  
 (q) 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2.      (r) Rom. ii. 4, 5.

by *giving glory to GOD* (s).—To this purpose let me address you, my *Christian* brethren; to be diligent and serious in attending the *ordinances* of Divine institution, and especially *that of hearing the word*; for as the *Apostle* observes, *faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of GOD* (t). And it is certain, the better we are acquainted with the *word of GOD*, the more shall we trace of its *evidence*; and it is probable we shall also *feel* so much the more of its *energy*, awaking and confirming those internal acts of *faith*, which it is our duty with increasing vigour daily to renew: and I doubt not but the *experience* of many that hear me, attests the reasonableness of this address.—Let me also exhort you to seek after greater *strength of faith* by fervent application to GOD in *prayer*; as the *Disciples* that came unto Jesus, and said, *Lord, increase our faith* (u). Plead that your *faith*, in its original, and in its progress, is the *word of GOD*; and earnestly intreat that *his work* may be perfected (w).—And to add efficacy to all; labour to the utmost to *bring forth* the genuine *fruits of true faith*, in all the branches of a holy temper, and exemplary life. Thus *show* to all that are about you *your faith by your works* (x); *walking worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called* (y), *worthy of him that has called you to his kingdom and glory* (z). For in proportion to the degree with which *these fruits* appear, it will be evident there is *life at the root*; and you will find, that as the *vigour* of our *limbs*, so also *that of our virtues and graces* will grow by use and exercise. And in this view let me observe,

(s) Rom. iv. 20.  
 (w) 1 Thess. iii. 10.  
 (z) 1 Thess. ii. 12.

(t) Rom. x. 17.  
 (x) James ii. 18.

(u) Luke xvii. 5.  
 (y) Ephes. iv. 1.

5. THAT if we are saved by grace through faith, then "there is encouragement even for the weakest soul, to seek after this Gospel salvation, and to hope it shall obtain it."

GIVE me leave here to address myself to those whose hearts are impressed with their eternal concerns, but then feel their own manifold weakness, and perhaps may be discouraged (as young persons very frequently are) with observing the difficulty of religion. My brethren, if your hopes of justification were by the works of the law, whether the ceremonial or the moral law, these discouragements were just: since were all the sins of your former life forgiven upon your return to God, yet through the infirmities of human nature, and the temptations of life, you would no doubt quickly fall into some new transgression; and this one, even the least, would be sufficient to ruin you, and to bring you into condemnation again. But the righteousness of faith speaks an easier and more gracious language, when it says, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved* (a). You know of whom it was said, *A bruised reed will he not break, and smoking flax will he not quench* (b): why should you not then enter into a treaty with so mild, so gracious, so compassionate a Saviour! Nay, I will add, Why should you not be saved by him! Are you willing to accept his grace? Methinks I hear one and another reply, "What do I desire so much as to accept it? Feeble and guilty as I am, I would at least bow as low as any of thy servants, in a thankful acknowledgement of the riches and freedom of thy grace; and I would ascribe my salvation to it in as entire a renunciation of all self-dependence, as any of them all

(a) Acts xvi. 31. (b) Matt. xii. 20.

" should

“should do.” And when I *ask* (as it is necessary I should ask) Are you also *willing to bow to his yoke?* I persuade myself there are those of you whose conscience answers, “Lord, I would *take it upon me*, with a most thankful consent: *I desire nothing so much as to serve thee*; but I *suspect* this treacherous and inconstant *heart*, that is so ready to *forsake thee*.” My brethren, *this desire of serving him*, if you know what you say when you express it, is the *effect of his grace*; and it is a comfortable *token* that *he will give more grace* (c.) Set yourselves therefore, with a cheerful courage, to oppose those difficulties that lie in the way, and to *work out your own salvation* with hope and joy, as well as *with fear and trembling*; for it is *GOD* that even now is *working in you*, both to *will, and to do*, of his good pleasure (d); and you have abundant reason to *hope* he will not *forsake the work of his own hands* (e).

6. If the doctrine of *salvation by grace through faith* be so divine and important as we have heard, then “let us *take great heed* that we do not *bring a reproach* upon it by an *irregular and licentious behaviour*.”

LET the holy *Apostle*, who is the great asserter of *this doctrine*, be heard as the guardian of its honour, when he says, *Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? GOD forbid* (f)! You plainly see, that *this doctrine*, when *scripturally* explained as above, gives no rational *foundation*, no, nor even any plausible *excuse*, for such an *inference*, however the *corruption* of men’s hearts may *take occasion* from it. And it would be far *more reasonable*, and much *less detrimental* to

(c) James iv. 6. (d) Phil. ii. 12, 13. (e) Psal. cxxxviii. 8.  
(f) Rom. vi. 1.

mankind, to endeavour to *root up all the vines* in the world, and *destroy all the animals* intended for food, because *wine and flesh* are sometimes the occasions and instruments of luxurious *riot*; than to deny this important *doctrine*, because it may be *perverted* to purposes *unfriendly* to *practical religion*. But see you to it, my friends, that you, if you are persuaded *this is the doctrine of GOD*, behave in such a manner, as to shew that you perceive it to be, what indeed it is, a *doctrine according to godliness* (g). *Woe to that man, by whom, in this instance, the offence comes!* It had been better for him, that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea (h), than that he should occasion such dishonour to GOD, and bring such a reproach upon his truths and his ways. And give me leave to say, there is hardly any consideration in the world that should cut deeper into the heart of the truly good man, of one who has *tasted that the Lord is gracious* (i), and has *believed through grace* (k), than the reflections of having made such *unworthy and ungrateful returns* to GOD, for that *singular mercy* which he has obtained from him, in the provision which the *Gospel* has made for his *salvation*, in so gracious, and so endearing a way.

LET me therefore conclude with *charging you*, in the most solemn manner, *before GOD and the Lord Jesus Christ* (l), and by the honour of that *Gospel* you so strenuously profess, that you exercise a holy *watchfulness over yourselves* in this respect. Consider my brethren, how many *eyes are upon you for evil*. It is true indeed, that *charity*, that boasted name, that divine principle, would teach men another

(g) 1 Tim. vi. 3.

(h) Matt. xvii. 6, 7.

(i) 1 Pet. ii. 3.

(k) Acts xvii. 27.

(l) 2 Tim. iv. 1.

Lesson: it would teach them to *mourn* rather than to *triumph over the faults* of them that call themselves *Christians*. But there is very little of *that* to be found; and on the contrary, a great deal of that *carnal, sensual, and diabolical zeal*, which *rejoices in iniquity* (m), and takes the greatest pleasure in the *irregularities of those* whose failings ought most to be lamented; that is, *of those* who are most signalized by a *Christian profession*. Remember therefore, and consider, my friends, that it would be *far better for you to die*, than to *lay a stumbling block* in the way of the souls of men; and to give them any just cause for representing the *Gospel* as a *doctrine of licentiousness*, or speaking of *Christ* as *the minister of sin* (n).

You solemnly *renounce* all dependance upon *your own righteousness* before God; and in professing to do it, and to express *salvation by his grace alone*, you do well. But give me leave to say, that if, in the mean time, *you yourselves are found sinners*, allowing yourselves habitually in any thing contrary to the Divine will, the *renunciation of such a righteousness* as is consistent with that, will be a very unworthy kind of sacrifice *before GOD*, and do very little credit to your profession *before men*. And by these declarations, when compared with so bad a conduct, you will run a great risque of bringing your *religious notions* themselves into *disgrace*, and will probably build again *that* which you seem most solicitous to destroy. Let it therefore evidently appear, that *the grace of GOD, which appears unto all men*, has effectually taught you to *deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and to *live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world* (o). Let the whole world about you see that the *Divine*

(m) 1 Cor. xiii. 6.

(n) Gal. ii. 17.

(o) Tit. ii. 11, 12.



*goodness to you, in which you rejoice and glory, has had its efficacy to purify and humanize your hearts, to fill them with humility and universal love, and to inspire them with a most friendly, benevolent, generous care for the happiness of all around you, as well as with a generous concern to make your own calling and election sure (p). Nothing will so powerfully plead for the gospel, as such a care to adorn it, and to seek that SALVATION which is entirely OF GRACE through sanctification of the Spirit, as well as the belief of the truth (q).*

(p) 2 Peter i. 10.

(q) 2 Thess. ii. 13.

FINIS.