

*Rev. Dr. Freeman*

*from his Friends*

*The Author.*

AN

**ADDRESS**

**DELIVERED IN THE**

**CHAPEL OF THE STATE PRISON,**

**CHARLESTOWN.**

AN  
ADDRESS

DELIVERED IN THE  
CHAPEL OF THE STATE PRISON,  
CHARLESTOWN,

TO  
THE CONVICTS,

At the request of the Board of Directors,

ON  
THURSDAY, the 6th day of APRIL, 1815,

BEING

The day set apart by Authority,

FOR

A DAY OF FASTING AND PRAYER

Throughout the Commonwealth.

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By JAMES PRINCE, Esq.  
*Chairman of the Board of Directors.*

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*Published at the request of the Officers of the Prison.*

BOSTON:  
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1815.

*Directors' Room, State Prison,  
CHARLESTOWN, April 10, 1815.*

SIR,

**YOUR** colleagues, Directors of this Institution, have received from the Keeper, in behalf of the Officers of the Prison, a request that we would ask a copy of your Address to the Convicts on the day of the annual Fast, for the purpose of its being printed and distributed through the cells.

As this request meets our own ideas of the utility of that very appropriate performance, we beg you would allow us permission to have the same printed and distributed accordingly.

We are, with regard and esteem,

Your sincere friends,

JAMES T. AUSTIN, }  
CALEB BINGHAM, } *Directors.*

JAMES PRINCE, Esq. *Chairman of the Board of Directors  
of the State Prison.*

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*Boston, April 11, 1815.*

GENTLEMEN,

I TRANSMIT to you and the Officers of the State Prison, a copy of the Address delivered to the Convicts, pursuant to your vote, on the day of the annual Fast, with a hope that when published, its dissemination may prove beneficial to the Institution, and to the unfortunate characters under our charge.

With friendly salutations,

I am your obedient serv't.

JAMES PRINCE.

JAMES T. AUSTIN, }  
and }  
CALEB BINGHAM, } Esq'rs.

*Directors of the State Prison,  
Charlestown.*

AN

## ADDRESS, &c.

**CALLED** upon by the existing regulations of the government of this institution, to take a leading part in the public exercises of the day, I have presumed, under a firm persuasion that the scriptures are given to us for our edification and improvement, to select one of the exhortations of the wise man, as a text for the present address :

*“In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider.\**

My colleagues have on these occasions exhibited to you many causes which should induce you to offer a constant tribute of praise to the great Father of all, for the blessings yet within your controul; and they have justly observed, that in the benignity of the law which established this institution, by which the punishment of crimes has been changed to confinement, solitude and labor, for periods proportioned to each offence, with a view to produce industry, and a love for the moral

\* Ecclesiastes chap. 7, verse 14.

and social virtues, and thereby restore offenders to society so improved as to render them hereafter useful in their day and generation, instead of consigning them for those crimes to that dark and narrow cell, from whence they would not be emancipated, but by the *trump of the arch-angel*, is a cause for every convict to be thankful, while it imposes upon him an awful responsibility to avail himself of the opportunity thus afforded him, penitently to review his past life, and to turn from the "error of his ways and to do that which is lawful and right."

The labor enjoined as a punishment is also calculated to enable some of you to gain a knowledge of a mechanic art, which, if industriously pursued after you return to society, may furnish you the means to gain your daily bread.

Last, though not least, the system of religious instruction here established, by which life and immortality as brought to light by the gospel, are statedly preached to you, is a privilege which the criminals of few countries possess, and ought to inspire you with the most exalted gratitude, because it pertains not only to the life that now is, but to that which is to come.

But I enlarge not on a theme which has

been so fully displayed by my brethren who have gone before me ; and I dismiss this branch of the subject with a farther injunction from the Psalmist, "*Be ye joyful in the Lord all ye people ; be thankful unto him, and speak good of his name ; for his mercy endureth for ever.*"

The supreme executive of the Commonwealth have invited its citizens to meet together on this day, and with one accord "to humble themselves before the majesty of heaven for their personal and national sins ; to implore his forgiveness, and to beg for mercy for themselves and for their country." While it becomes every citizen to comply with this reasonable invitation, it particularly calls on you, seriously to reflect on your past lives, to look into the causes which brought you within these walls, to avail yourselves of the advantages which you here enjoy for producing reformation, and for acquiring those habits which may restore you to society so elevated in your minds, and so profited by your seclusion from the world, as, should you adhere to them, will wipe away the foul stain now attached to your characters, and render you estimable in the opinion of your fellow citizens.

As a corner stone whereon to erect so

goodly a building, you must commence by establishing, and afterwards by maintaining within your breasts, a sincere love and veneration for God as your Creator, Preserver, and continual Benefactor. "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,*" and the delight of a wise man is the keeping of his commandments. These will have a powerful influence in regulating your conduct, and persuading you to refrain from every act which might incur his displeasure ; they will prevail upon you to "lay aside all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and to receive with meekness his engrafted word which is able to save your souls." The language of the Bible is, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all necessary things shall be added unto you." Piety maintained with fervor and zeal, will be your firmest guard, your surest guide, and your most desirable companion. It will teach you true humility ; it will regulate your conduct ; and while it animates you to cherish a supreme love and veneration for Deity, it will lead you to a respect and affection for your fellow beings, as an exalted portion of the heavenly heritage. Having habituated yourselves to cherish a love and reverence towards God, not only as your Creator, but as your best Friend, and

ascertained from happy experience. that it is your greatest "blessing to keep his commandments," you will look back with horror on those scenes of profligacy and vice which first seduced you from the paths of innocence, made shipwreck of your virtue, and finally brought you to this place of punishment and contrition. Acts of disobedience to parents, neglect of the sabbath, lying, profanity, dissipation, lewdness, quarrelling, gaming, drunkenness, love of bad company, cheating, swindling, and theft, with those others which form the black catalogue of crimes (until they may have reached the highest on the list) will be viewed with horror and contrition; and under the influence of these sentiments, which an habitual acquaintance with piety and virtue suggests, you will be secure against the wiles of the deceiver, should he again attempt to seduce you from the path of heavenly wisdom.

Animated by an affectionate love for God; impressed with a sense of your dependence on him for life, breath and every favour; conscious of, and humbly penitent for the many faults you have committed against him; persuaded that his all-seeing eye pervades your paths, and that he is the moral and righteous governor of the world, your minds will be brought to know and to consider, that he re-



quires from you to indulge and to exercise towards your neighbour a semblance of the measure of love and justice which you yourselves constantly receive from him. Possessing improved and disciplined minds, really "abhorring that which is evil, and desirous of cleaving to that which is good," you will be "just, generous and benevolent ;" you will abstain from every action which may have a tendency to injure a fellow being, either in his person, his family, his property, or his character. Nor will you stop here ; you will be led to consider the happiness of your neighbour as in a degree affiliated with your own. The tender and benign sympathies of the heart will be brought into operation : you will "weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice." Your hand will be stretched out to their relief in their distress, and if you cannot, from the narrow limits of your purse, pour in of "your oil and of your wine" in great abundance, yet you will have the consolation of knowing that the God whom you serve never holds in contempt, but always graciously receives "the widow's mite."

Yes ! { "He sees with equal eye, as God of all,  
 { "A hero perish, or a sparrow fall."

I have premised that it is your duty, in this your day of adversity, to consider the

advantages you may derive from your present confinement, by habituating yourselves while here to a life of morality and industry ; but these advantages are not to be acquired without exertion. It is in vain that you attend on the exercises of religion, unless with your lips, your hearts are united. You must be “doers as well as hearers of the word.” When you go out from this house of prayer, you should recollect and consider the precepts which are occasionally delivered to you from the oracles of truth, nor suffer “*tares to spring up in your minds and choak them.*”

The work of salvation is no common employment : it is the great concern of life, for its object is happiness not only in time, but through eternity. It requires that the mind be seriously and fervently engaged.

If you would go to God, you must go to him under a firm belief of his majesty and power, and with a lively faith that “he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him.” If you are really desirous of obtaining the favor of God and life everlasting, you must cultivate holy affections, and love and practice virtue ; for recollect it is not every one that saith, “Lord, Lord, who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of the Father.”

## And what is his will ?

"To God with humble reverence bow,  
 "And to his glory live ;  
 "To men their sacred rights allow,  
 "And proofs of kindness give :  
 "Hands that are clean, and hearts sincere,  
 "God never will despise :  
 "And cheerful duty he'll prefer  
 "To costly sacrifice."

On retiring to your cells, instead of idling away your time in profane, obscene, or dissolute discourse, you should hold communion one with another of the things which may strengthen you in the bonds of justice, truth and righteousness. Your conversation should partake of that which is "honest, virtuous, and of good report." You should excite one another to acts of piety and benevolence ; you should often read together passages from the holy scriptures, and particularly that excellent sermon of our Lord's, delivered on the mount ; a discourse so exalted, that the wisest of men may derive information, yet so plain, that the meanest capacity may fully comprehend and be edified by its precepts. On reclining upon your pillows, you should uniformly recede from the vanities of the world, and place yourselves in the more immediate presence of your heavenly Father, who sees and hears in secret, and will reward the faithful openly. Prayer, (says an elegant writer)

places man in the presence chamber of Omnipotence, while the blood of sprinkling procures him secret audience." You should also consider the importance of curbing your irregular desires, and of bringing your minds into a state of perfect discipline, by resisting the approaches of those baneful passions, envy, hatred, malice, covetousness, hypocrisy, and all uncharitableness; and strive to be honest, sober, temperate, and chaste; to elevate your thoughts and language above loose, profane, and immodest ideas. You should often commune in private with your own hearts, and review the lives you have led, the company you have kept, and the first assaults of the deceiver, who of your old companions aided him in the attack, and how and when they caused you finally to wander from the paths of religion and innocence. If you are desirous of succeeding in forming good habits, you should bring before you every dissolute action, the thorns and the briars which at first sprung up and pricked your consciences until they became seared and callous; and you should accompany these reviews with penitence and contrition to your heavenly Father, and with earnest supplications that you may be delivered from farther assaults on your virtue.

You must also bring your mind to a state of subordination as it respects your future social connections with your neighbors. "If we love not our brother whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen." You should therefore resolve, that though you have done him an injury, you will injure him no more.

When you may be permitted to depart hence, you will have to provide for your daily subsistence; it is necessary therefore that you acquire habits of industry and sobriety. Such of you as came here attached to no particular calling, should profit by your confinement (even at this late hour) and apply yourselves to one of those mechanic employments which are carried on within these walls, as a mean hereafter of supporting yourselves in the world; remembering that it but seldom happens, that "the hand of the dilligent man fails to make him rich."

You must also yield a quiet and ready obedience to the rules and regulations established for your government while within the prison, and be respectful and submissive to the officers thereof, as a mean of obtaining favor from the government.

On this occasion, it may not be improper to state, that a daily report is made from the

respective overseers to the executive officer of the prison, of the behavior of each individual ; every act of insubordination is noted down, and the report preserved. It is true, the power of pardon is wisely and exclusively vested in the Supreme Executive : but on all applications for clemency, an inquiry is made by them into the conduct of the individual, and I think I am justified in stating, that neither the interposition of friends, nor your own petitions are eventually listened to, unless they are strengthened by an opinion of this Direction, that your behavior has been such while confined, as may lead to a belief that you may be restored to the world without endangering the interests of society. If therefore any of you flatter yourselves with the hope of receiving an act of clemency from the government, let me inform you that your success will depend on the correctness of your conduct while confined here.

The Directors are not ignorant, that, through the influence of friends, convicts, *less deserving than others*, sometimes obtrude their petitions before that high authority ; but let not such of you as are pilgrims and strangers in the land despair. No ! The small voice of penitence and contrition passes not by as "the idle wind." You too have friends disposed

to present your cases before that tribunal, and it is pleasing to believe, they are in general heard. Let this information stimulate you to cherish habits of virtue, industry, and subordination ; and to trust to those friends for “the recompence of reward.”

I should here close this address, if the two classes of convicts, directly in front, did not excite particular attention. *I mean the females and the youths.*

While it is lamented that any portion of a sex, intended by their Maker as helpmates to the other, should have been so lost to the delicate and tender feelings of the heart, as to render their liberty dangerous to society and oblige them to be secluded from the world, and immured within these walls, these unpleasing reflections are heightened with the government of this Institution, from their being often called to witness the many acts of insubordination, indelicacy, and crime which are daily exhibited among you, and which devolve on them the unpleasant task of administering those correctives, which their duty, and the interest of the Institution make necessary, to remedy the evil.

Let me advise you, my female hearers, seriously to look into your conduct, and compare it with the standard of delicacy and pro-

priety. Reflect carefully on the evil tendency of those improprieties you have been, (and with pain I repeat it,) are daily guilty of; and be persuaded to turn from the allurements of the Tempter, and strive to regain the delicate and interesting situation with society, originally attached to your sex, when the first female was introduced on the theatre of life. "It is not good, (said the Almighty,) "that man should be alone;" therefore, he presented your sex to our first parent. Appreciate then the dignified rank which he intended you should sustain; and hereafter, by lives of piety, honesty, industry and chastity, confirm by your examples the justness of the wise man's remark, "That the price of a virtuous woman is far above rubies." "I will," said the apostle, "that husbands behold the chaste conversation of their wives, coupled with fear; and, that their adorning be not that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, of wearing of gold, or of putting on of costly apparel; but let it be the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price." After this manner, in old time, the holy women who trusted in God, adorned themselves; and, *remember,* "the eyes of the Lord are over all your ways,



*and his judgments are against them that do evil."*

To you, CHILDREN OF MISFORTUNE! I also address myself, and earnestly exhort you, in the name of that Omniscient Being, who is witnessing this solemn scene, that you "turn from the error you have committed," and seriously "seek the Lord while he may be found," and "call upon him while he is near." Though health may now bloom upon your cheeks, yet fancy not that you may have many years to live. No! Every burial ground can present you the graves of children who now slumber in the dust, shorter and of less years than would be yours, were you this night summoned before your Judge by the grim King of Terrors. Believe me, my young hearers, "Now," and now only "is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Count not therefore with too much certainty on length of days, lest your Creator in judgment should say, "This night your souls shall be required of you." "Make haste and delay not to keep the commandments of God."

As a sure mean of acquiring pious habits, and correct minds, let me advise you to a familiar acquaintance with the sacred scriptures. Those pages will, (if you listen to

them with attention, and practise their precepts without wavering,) “make you wise unto salvation;” they will be a “lamp which will display to you the true path of duty;” they will cheer you in adversity, and afford you an additional pleasure in prosperity. The precepts of the gospel “are merchandize far better than silver, and of more value than the most fine gold.” “Length of days are in their right hand, and in their left riches and honor.” They point out to you, when flesh and heart may fail you, a country beyond the grave, in which through the merits of your once crucified, but now exalted redeemer (if you are found worthy) you will be made partakers of “an inheritance, incorruptible undefiled and that passeth not away, eternal in the heavens.”

Never permit yourselves to retire to rest without commending your bodies to the protection, and your immortal souls to the grace and mercy of your heavenly Father. And be assured that “whatsoever you ask in faith, will be given unto you.” “Seeing then you have such great, such precious promises,” instantly “lay aside every sin, and superfluity of naughtiness, and run with patience the race set before you as becomes the children of the most high God; adding to your faith, virtue,

and to virtue, knowldge, and to knowledge, temperance, and to temperance every good work ; that so when he who is your life, shall appear, you also may appear with him in glory.”

I close this address to you with the counsel of a great king to a favorite child : “Know, I pray you, the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a pure heart, and humble mind ; if you seek him, he will be found of you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.”

Permit me, as a review of this address, to observe to all who have heard me, that its subject matter is not wholly inapplicable to either of us. Although particularly made to the convicts, we ought not like the vain Pharisee to presume, that perfection forms a leading trait in our characters, or that these unfortunate tenants, on whom “the tower of Siloam seems to have fallen, have been sinners beyond all the rest in Galilee ;” for, “without holiness, none of us will see salvation.” Avoiding abstruse metaphysical disquisitions in religion, as “mint and cummin,” let us obey with exactitude the “weightier matters of the law,” by a practical and zealous performance of those moral and social duties which are so clearly inculcated in the Gospel, and so uniformly exemplified in the

life and in the conversation of the great founder of our religion.

“For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,  
“His can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”

Yes! know O man! what is good, and what the Lord thy God requires of thee: it is, “to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before him.” If with piety and zeal you faithfully discharge these important duties, wherever has been your birth, whatever may be the color of your skin, or however humble your situation in life, the Being who made you, and whom you thus delight to worship and obey, has assured you, that “He is no respecter of persons; but of every nation he who feareth God and worketh righteousness will be accepted of him.” And to this animating belief of the mercy and benevolence of Deity, as it is connected with our prospects beyond the grave, may be added as a farther inducement to duty, those advantages which are enjoyed on earth by the virtuous and the good; for nothing is more true than “that in the keeping of God’s commandments there is great reward.” While “the wicked are tossed to and fro like the troubled sea,” the pious and the good enjoy that peace, “which is sure and steadfast;” a peace that will withstand the vicissitudes of life; and in the

moment of death will disarm the King of Terrors of his sting ; being the prelude to that rest which remaineth for the workers of righteousness, in the mansions of a blessed immortality.

**NOTE....**On the day this Address was delivered, there were seventeen female convicts : and there were also thirty-one youths under the age of twenty-one years ; and three boys under the age of fourteen years ; establishing this melancholly fact, that one seventh of the convicts are under the age of twenty-one years.