

SELECT DISCOURSES

ON

Practical Subjects.

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The Transcriber's Preface.

THE vein of evangelical piety, which runs thro the following sermons, will amply repay every Christian for perusing them. The eminent goodness of the author will doubtless attract the attention of all, who know him, to these select Discourses, which are now given to the world, as memorials of his virtue, and as helps to the cause of true religion. For their publication we are indebted to the pious generosity of the author's son, who rejoices that he can, as he hopes, contribute something to the good of his fellow men, and at the same time perpetuate the memory of the best of fathers.

These discourses were selected from a large number, which were found among the author's

writings. As they were not intended for the press, and as the mode of sermonizing is much altered, since they were written; the transcriber has, with the consent of his employer, in some cases changed a word or phrase for another, which he thought would be more acceptable; in other cases he has omitted repetitions; in others abridged what appeared too prolix—May the good, which the reader derives from these discourses, recompence the benevolence and liberality, which prompted to their publication.





S E R M O N I.

ON PRAYER.

2 CHRON. i. 7.

ASK WHAT I SHALL GIVE THEE.

THE dreams, in which God has communicated information to his people, have generally succeeded earnest solicitude at the throne of grace, or uncommon engagedness in some branch of duty. Solomon, lately deprived of a wife and Godly father, and entering, very young, on the stage of important action, greatly needed divine assistance. He had been offering burnt offerings to the Lord, accompanied with earnest prayers, in which his heart was drawn forth in desires after spiritual wisdom.

God, according to the condescending methods of his grace, encouraged this youth in seeking divine knowledge. He deigns to converse with him in a dream. "Ask what I shall give thee."

Great and important words ; spoken to Solomon by that God, who had given his father the throne of Israel, and now received him to the kingdom of his glory ; by that God, who will supply the necessities and grant the just desires of all his creatures. We may consider these words, as a renewal of the dying charge, which his pious father gave him, to seek the friendship and help of God.

"Solomon, remember thy dying father charged thee, to know me and to keep my covenant. I then took notice of the charge, and now urge it upon thee to come to me with all thy wants and difficulties. Let me hear them from thy mouth. Thy father's charge is now mine. "*Ask what I shall give thee.*" These words imply a gracious permission to ask what he would. Solomon, thou art entering into a world, to which thou art a stranger. Thou wilt find it a world of care, trouble, and temptation ; a wilderness full of beasts and birds of prey, fierce tygers and subtle dragons. Danger is before thee ; but be not discouraged. Make me thy

friend. Come to me as often as thou wilt, and with as much freedom, as thou wouldst to thy earthly father. Come at all times, in all conditions. Ask such things as are needful for thee. I am all sufficient, both able and willing to supply thy wants. Thou hast heard thy father say, that I delivered him out of his troubles; that my covenant was everlasting and ordered in all things; that it contained all his salvation and all his desire. My treasures are not exhausted. I have infinite stores of good for thy use, if thou wilt ask them."

"Ask what I shall give thee. I have a kindness to thee for thy father's sake. Come, therefore, frequently and freely, and never forsake thy father's friend."

"Ask what I shall give thee; not what I shall lend thee; nor what I shall sell thee; but what I shall give thee according to the riches of my benevolence and royal bounty." A direction is implied. "Ask the greatest, dearest, best things. Have thine eye on durable blessings. Earthly things are *lent*, not *given*. Raise thy desire to that, which my goodness will be manifested and honored in giving."

"Ask, but take heed of whom. Ask not of man, nor of your treasures, especially not of

your idols. "But ask of me. Ask with a feeling sense of your need, and a full apprehension of my ability to supply thee; of my willingness to give what is suited to my glory and thy good."

"Ask what I shall give thee." We hear the words of a tender and compassionate father. He sees the afflictions of his son. He is resolved to relieve him. "I am affected with thy cares and distresses. What shall I do for thee? I am able and willing to help thee. What is thy petition, and it shall be granted." Oh, kind and gracious words of our heavenly Father. Here is a charter of more value, than all the world.

From the words of the text we may infer this doctrine; *God expects his children will ask what they desire him to do for them*;—which I propose as the subject of the following discourse.

Our blessed Savior commands his disciples to *ask*; and to make this duty a privilege, he adds, "and ye shall receive." To enforce this duty and to make it more familiar to them, he, who cannot lie nor deceive, repeats the same command and promise, in different expressions, several times. "Seek, and ye shall

find ; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one, that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him, that knocketh, it shall be opened." Those who have no sense of their spiritual wants, or the infinite source of supplies, those, who slight the promises and disregard the authority of God, may dispute the duty and exclude themselves from the privilege of *asking divine favors*. They may think it a vain thing to spend their time in making supplications to God. But the issue will prove them to be in a miserable mistake both in point of duty and privilege.

Whatever is necessary for the safety and happiness of sinners, is purchased by Christ, and offered to all, who hear the gospel. All sinners where the scriptures are known and the ordinances of the gospel administered, have a full and sincere offer of the gifts of divine grace. Yet it is enjoined upon them by incontestable authority, *to ask and seek them of God*. Those therefore, who disobey this command, despise the highest authority and foolishly neglect the choicest privilege. These must be left to the *unmasked, unpromised* mercy of their God and Judge.

Those, who are sensible of their wants, and de-

firmous to seek a supply in the way of God's appointment, may be invited to consider the following particulars; 1. The reasons of prayer; 2. The manner in which it should be performed; 3. The proper time for prayer; 4. What we should pray for.

1. The reasons of prayer. The notion of merit in prayer is foolish and profane. The most exalted angel in heaven, in the highest exertion of his power, does no more, than his duty. He can claim nothing by way of merit. Sovereign goodness, has indeed joined his duty and happiness together; so that his obedience will be followed by felicity. But this depends on the goodness of God in the constitution of nature, and not on the merit or desert of the angel.—How, then, can the devotions of a creature stained with sin, whose best services are polluted, be supposed to have any merit in them? Pride, unbelief, hypocrisy, indifference, or some other vice, corrupts the best performances of the saints on earth, so that they need the *blood of sprinkling* to make them acceptable. Therefore the idea of meriting can be no reason for prayer.

Nor do we pray to inform the Omniscient

God, what we want and desire. Our heavenly father knoweth what we stand in need of, before we pray to him. He knows all our circumstances, both as to body and mind, infinitely better, than we do ourselves.

Nor do we pray in order to mark out for God the way, in which our wants shall be supplied. He knows what is good for us, and how to bestow it. He hath appointed the way, in which divine blessings must be obtained; and his appointment shall stand.—Having observed that we do not pray, in order to merit any thing of God, nor to inform him of our wants, nor to direct him how to supply them; I proceed to say,

1. We pray in order to bring ourselves into the presence of God, to acknowledge our relations to him, and our dependance upon him. A humble dependence, and prayerful spirit is more pleasing to God, than whole burnt offerings. He loves to have his children sensible of their wants, and of their dependance on his mercy for their supply. He loves to hear their supplications, and to see them come to him for help in every time of need.

A tender father sees the favor which his child wants, and is determined to bestow it.

Yet he is solicitous to bestow it in such a manner, as to secure his own honor, to promote a dutiful temper in his child. He therefore delays the bestowment of the gift, till his child comes to a sense of his need, and applies for the favor.

So God chuses to see that his children feel their poverty, and to hear their humble prayers for needed supplies, before he grants those supplies. For this reason, he sometimes brings his people into great trouble, so that they may have an errand to the throne of grace. Absalom wished to speak with Joab. He sent for him. Joab refused to come. But after Absalom had set his fields on fire, he immediately came. So it is with sinners. Their duty is pointed out to them ; the necessity of coming to God by prayer, and the promises of salvation by Christ are set forth. But they are engaged in other pursuits. Then God, if he design mercy for them, consumes their substance, or plunges them into some deep affliction, in order to bring them to a sense of their privilege and duty.

2. We must pray ; because a favor bestowed in answer to prayer, is greatly heightened

in value, and tends to encourage the faith and hope, and to animate the joy of God's people. It shows the father's tenderness, and exhibits him as willing to give his children all, that they can reasonably desire. The good received in this case inflames the gratitude of the receiver. The favor is seasonable, and the care and affection of the Father are evident. The child attains to a more perfect acquaintance with his heavenly Father. The oftener he comes to him, and receives from him the favors asked, the more he sees of his power and grace. Thus the bonds of filial affection are strengthened, and obedience is rendered more cheerful.

Frequent, important prayer tends directly to make God's people prize their mercies.—“This mercy,” they often think, “is doubly welcome. I have been praying, and hoping, and waiting for it. I was ready to think my unworthiness had shut out my prayer. But, Oh, 'tis come; and it is a mercy, a singular mercy.” There are no mercies so thankfully received and so suitably improved, as those that are bestowed, in answer to prayer.

3. We must pray, in order to become more

sensible of the influence of the Holy Spirit in prayer. The Holy Spirit is in believing a spirit of grace and supplication, and as such he helpeth their infirmities and maketh intercession for them. His breathings are delightful and reviving. Humble supplicants are moved and melted under his influence; their hearts burn within them, while they are conversing with their God and their Savior.

4. We must pray, in order to testify our willing subjection to the authority of God; exercise our faith; and to encrease our resignation. Finally, we must pray, in obedience to the Divine command. No command is oftener or more urgently repeated, than that, which enjoins prayer.

II. I proceed to consider the manner, in which acceptable prayer is to be made.

It may be observed, in the first place, that those, who pray acceptably, unfeignedly, desire what they ask. Otherwise prayer is mere ceremony, lip service, verbal compliment, hypocrisy, contempt, and mockery. God's eye is principally on the heart. When the heart has not those desires, which the person signifies by his words, there is nothing, which his heavenly Father will accept, as reverence and homage.

—The desires of the christian must be regulated by divine prescription. The high and noble end of them is the glory of God. To satisfy the lawful appetites of nature must not be our leading design in prayer; much less the gratification of any base lust. But all our desires must be made subservient to our chief end, the honor of God. If this is to be our *chief end*, then our prayer must be attended with submission to the will of God. We must have the temper, which Jesus had, when he said, “not my will, but thine be done.” We are not required to be without a will. This would be contrary to the original constitution of our nature. It is sufficient if our will and desires concur with the known will of God. There are some things which we may lawfully desire, with, however, a resignation to the will of God, whether he bestow them or not. This is the case with all temporal blessings. The infinite wisdom of God may see, that the favors, which we ask will be hurtful to ourselves or others, or that the evils, which we deprecate, will greatly conduce to our good. In these respects, therefore it is proper, that we be resigned to the sovereign dispos-

al of God. With respect to *spiritual blessings* the case is very different. It is absolutely agreeable to the will of God, that we should desire and ask them. It is agreeable to the fitness of things, and to the command of God, that spiritual light and life be desired by every human soul. When we ask for pardon and life, for grace to subdue our lusts, to overcome temptation, to bear difficulties, and to perform duty, we must unfeignedly desire what we ask. St. Austin before he was established in the love of the Gospel, once prayed that his lusts might be subdued. But his heart secretly said, "not yet, Lord;—let me have a little longer indulgence."—If we would find acceptance and favor with God, our hearts must accord with our words, when we pray for spiritual blessings. It is a dreadful thing to *lie to God*.

2. We must offer up our prayers in the name of Christ. We must consider him, as the procuring and meritorious cause of all the good we desire. He, that prays acceptably has a deep conviction of his unworthiness to receive any good. The publican, who met with the approbation of God, "did not so much as

lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, and said, God be merciful to me, a sinner." But this sense of unworthiness is not all, that is necessary in acceptable prayer. This alone would sink the sinner into despair, and make him unable to apply to God for any favor. He must have some knowledge of the way of access to God; the way, in which he may find acceptance with his offended sovereign. He must have such an apprehension of this way, as fully answers the sense he has of his own unworthiness and guilt. Otherwise his suspicious, troubled conscience will lie in the way of his hope, and expectation, and consequently of his prayer.

The only effectual contrivance for man's relief from the guilt and punishment of sin is revealed in the scriptures. The Holy Ghost there informs us that there is a Savior; describes his person, character, offices, and work, what his salvation is, and how he bestows it; and also the character of those, who are saved, both before and after salvation is actually applied to them. The gospel way of salvation is worthy of the holiness, wisdom, and other per-

fections of God, answers all the ends of the divine government, and is suited to the indigence, guilt, and misery of apostate man.

The revelation of this contrivance for man's salvation must not only reach the ear, but impress the heart of him, who would acceptably ask divine blessings. The stamp of the *new covenant* must be made upon his heart. He must have the disposition to seek all saving good in Christ and on account of his righteousness. He is the only medium, thro which sinful men can have access to God, and thro which God will communicate saving good to them. Our prayers, therefore, must be offered in the name of Christ. Indeed, we must come to God in Christ;—must deal with God thro a Mediator. The name of Christ is a token, which carries us into our Father's presence with acceptance.—“ Lord, says the prayerful soul, tho I am unworthy of any good; yet he, in whose name I come, is worthy. Tho I deserve to be rejected; yet my Advocate and Mediator deserves to be accepted and honored. In his name, and on his account I present my request.”—A king proclaims among his rebellious subjects, that he has made his son su-

preme Lord over all his realm, and that whoever will submit to *him*, and bring from *him* a token of their submission, and ask forgiveness in *his* name, shall be received into favor.— Now the poor, miserable rebel may come with confidence; and have no anxious fears about his acceptance. The king loves his son, and hath given all things into his hands. There is no doubt, therefore, but that he, who honors the Son, and the Father in him, will be graciously received and honored.— Thus Christ has assured us, that if we ask any thing in his name he will grant our request, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

3. If we would come acceptably to God, we must come under a sense of our ill desert and of the adorable sovereignty of the Lord of Hosts.— When the servants of Benhadad came to ask the life of their master, they put sackcloth on their loins, in token of their humiliation, and ropes upon their heads showing their acknowledgment, that they had forfeited their lives. In this manner they came to the king of Israel, and requested the life of their master; to which they were encouraged from having heard that the kings of Israel were merciful kings.— So ingenuous shame and re;

penitance must lay us prostrate at the foot of mercy. We must consider mercy as mercy, and humbly offer our request for it.—Our prayer should be conformed to the wonderful submission of Jesus ;—“ If it be possible, let this cup of affliction pass from me, or this temporal comfort be granted. Nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”

4. We must pray in faith. The promise is made to a believing application. We must have faith in God's ability to supply our wants, to subdue our corruptions, to mortify our lusts, to deliver us out of temptations ; to write his law upon our hearts and to put his fear within us. We must believe in Jesus Christ ; that there is a sufficiency in his righteousness and mediation ; that he is willing to grant all our lawful desires, to supply all our necessities, and to give us all, that is needful in order to life and blessedness.

5. We must pray earnestly. Loud, noisy supplication would indeed be an affront to the Divine Majesty. It would be as if we thought our God to be such a God, as Elijah represented Baal, when he said to his prophets,—“ cry aloud ; for he is talking ; or he is pursuing ; or he is on a journey ; or peradventure he sleep-

eth and must be awaked." We must take heed not to suppose that we shall be heard for our abundant speaking, or for our fluency and ease of expression. God hears and answers the groanings, and sighs of a pious heart, tho they cannot be uttered. Yet our Savior represents earnestness and importunity, as the way to success in prayer. He tells us, "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Coldness and indifference in asking seem to beg a denial. And they, who are willing to be denied must expect a denial.

6. We must use arguments and earnest pleadings in prayer. Of the success of such prayer we have many instances in the sacred writings. Jacob wrestles with God by pleading his promise. Moses expostulates with God,—“what wilt thou do for thy great name?” So does Joshua upon Israel’s defeat, “what will the Canaanites, thine enemies, say?” Holy David abounds with arguments in prayer. Sometimes he pleads his own necessities; sometimes God’s mercy and other perfections; sometimes his promise and covenant; sometimes the great distress and wants of God’s people; sometimes his own weakness;

and sometimes even the greatness of his sins—
 “ Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.” The
 new testament saints are to make use of the
 same arguments. But their principal pleas
 are the mercy of God and the merits of Christ.

3. We proposed to consider the proper
 times for prayer. There is a time, when God
 will hear prayer. There is a time when he will
 not hear. Tho they call upon him, he will
 not answer, tho they seek him, they shall not
 find him. It is a very momentous enquiry,
 when shall we pray so as to receive a gracious
 answer? It may be replied;

1. We must pray, when God commands
 and encourages us to pray. It was a time for
 Solomon to pray, when God said to him, “ ask
 what I shall give thee.” The present time is
 the right time for every person to pray, “ Now
 is the accepted time.” “ Seek the Lord, while
 he may be found; call upon him while he is
 near.” Ahafuerus held out his sceptre to
 Esther. It was a token of favor. Then was
 the time for her to take courage, approach the
 king, and touch his sceptre. When God holds
 out the sceptre of his grace, then is the time
 to approach him, when he says, “ seek ye my

face," then it is fit and seasonable for the soul to answer, "thy face, Oh Lord, will I seek." It is true we are not favored with the visions and revelations, which were granted to the prophets and saints of old. Yet their visions and revelations were made for our good, "that we thro patience and comfort of the *scriptures* might have hope." And the holy spirit often moves, by *them*, upon the hearts of the good, exciting and strengthening them to prayer and other duties. When this is the case, it is fit and acceptable to go to God by prayer. Sometimes God speaks to the soul in the word, convincing of sin, and exhorting to the discharge of duty; particularly marking out the neglected duty of prayer. When God thus speaks, we should hear and obey.

2. A time of fear and perplexity is a time for earnest prayer. "At what time I am afraid, I will trust in the Lord, said the Psalmist. It is the constant practice of believers, by faith and prayer to make "the name of God their strong tower." There they find protection, when oppressed with temporal or spiritual troubles. When the Ethiopians came against Jehoshaphat, he feared,—prayed,—and was

delivered. Moses prays, and the plague is stayed.

God delights to show his power and make his mercy known by delivering the distressed, when they call upon him. Indeed it is frequently God's design in bringing his people into trouble, to make them sensible of their dependence on his aid, and to lead them to seek his face. He declares, "in the day of affliction they shall seek me early." When, therefore, the saints are in distress, let "their eyes be unto the Lord," and they shall see what he can do for them.

3. When persons are in pressing sorrow, pinching necessity, in any kind of calamity or want; it is their duty and privilege to pray to God for what they need.—David says, "I am in distress; Oh Lord, undertake for me." This was often the case with him. His sin in numbering the people brought him into distress. It was a wise choice, which he then made, "to fall into the hands of the Lord." When Jonah went down to the depths of the sea, and the billows passed over him,—in this sad and almost desperate condition, he cried to the Lord; and the Lord delivered him. Paul, when afflicted with a thorn in the flesh, prayed

to Jesus Christ, and received sufficiency of grace. Good Hezekiah was sick and nigh to death. His disorder admitted no ordinary cure. Nothing but the grave opened to his view. He turns to the wall, and weeps, and prays. It was not in vain. What could not be done by common means, was done by the immediate power and mercy of God.

The Israelites were in great straits at the red sea. Armed hosts of Egyptians were behind them; a vast wilderness on one side, impassable mountains on the other, and the sea before them. Now Moses prays, and the Lord is their helper.

When the prodigal had spent his substance in riotous living, and was reduced to the extremes of poverty,—then he arose, and went to his father, and attained abundant supplies.

When the mind is sunk with cares and overwhelmed with sorrows; when one wave after another rolls over the soul; frequent, earnest application at the throne of grace is the only way, in which we may expect relief.

When the heart knows the bitterness of sin; where it is burdened and broken with guilt, now is the time to fly from the *avenger of blood* to the city of refuge, to look to Jesus Christ for pardon and eternal life.

4. Public calamity and danger afford reasons for prayer. Sometimes God threatens to leave a people ; there are tokens of his departure, of the removal of the gospel. Judgments hasten. Destruction is at the door. A general stupidity prevails. Few enquire into the cause of "the terrible things, which God is doing in righteousness. God is rising to take vengeance. At the same time public iniquity prevails. Sin breaks out in a great variety of daring disobedience. "God's glittering sword is in his hand ; his bow bent his arrows on the string," while sinners are unawakened, unhumbled, unreformed. All abandon themselves to the services of their lusts, regardless of God's word and the operations of his hand. None stir up themselves to call upon the name of the Lord.—When such sad symptoms of destruction appear, among a people, then is the time for Saints to apply earnestly to God ; "to make up the hedge and stand in the gap before God, that he may not destroy the people." Such a time is not a time for silence,—for christians to hold their peace. Let them cry mightily to God for the church and for their country, while there is a possibility of help.

IV. We proceed to consider the things, which we should pray for. God says to Solomon, "Ask, what I shall give thee"? God, in his word, proposes the same thing to every man and woman in this assembly, as he did to Solomon;—"ask, what I shall give thee"?—The daughter of Herodias, at the instigation of her mother, made a very wicked request of Herod, who had promised her whatever she should ask, even to the half of his kingdom.—There is need of great deliberation and care in asking favors of the Lord. What shall each one in this congregation ask of the Lord? He gives you the privilege making known your request to him. What ought you to pray for?—It may be replied,

1. Every one should sincerely desire, and ask, the grace of God. There must be no double dealing, no prevarication in this matter. Ask, and ask sincerely an interest in the covenant of grace. Some of you have a visible interest in the covenant. Some of you have neglected even this. You all need not only an external, but an internal, and saving interest in the covenant. You all need an interest in God, as reconciled in Christ, who is the mediator and surety of the covenant. All saving good is dispensed in a covenant way,

first to Christ, the head of the church, and then to the particular members, who are chosen in him. The good of the covenant is exhibited in the gospel, and offered to sinners infinitely, without any personal limitation. It is God's prerogative to prescribe the privileges and duties of the covenant, as well as to limit the terms and extent of it. He hath done it in sovereign wisdom and mercy.

Believers and their seed are entitled to all the benefits of the covenant; and believers are, in a measure, actually possessed of them. Now, therefore, dispute not against your right in the visible administration of the covenant; but close with it and consent to it, as ordered in all things and sure; and as containing all your salvation and all your desire—ask that you may be savingly brought into the covenant and partake of all its blessings. You, that are visibly in the the covenant, are under the most solemn obligations to do so. The very propounding of the covenant were an obligation sufficient to bind you to this duty. But your obligation is exceedingly strengthened by the visible seal, which God hath set upon you.

Ask a new heart. This is one of the blessings promised in the new covenant. “A

new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh .”

Ask a wise and understanding heart. This was Solomon’s acceptable petition. Ask a heart to know God and Jesus Christ, whom to know aright is life eternal. Ask an understanding to know the mysteries of the kingdom ; discern the precious and important parts of the covenant. Naturally we cannot receive the things of the spirit of God ; tho’ clearly revealed, we cannot know their true beauty ; worth and importance.

Ask a heart to consent to the terms of the covenant ; to embrace every article of it ; especially that, which is the sum of the whole
 “ I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee.”

Ask the knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus, and as it is revealed in the gospel. Pray that you may love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself. This is a blessing promised in the covenant.
 “ And 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." Pray that the enmity of your hearts may not only be prevented from breaking out in open crimes, but subdued, and entirely destroyed. Pray that you may be reconciled to God, and delight in his law, as expressive of his mind and will; that the law of God may be written in your hearts and his fear put within you.

Ask faith to apprehend and rest upon Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the covenant and head of the church. Ask repentance. This gift is a part of the covenant. "Christ is exalted to give repentance and the remission of sin.

Ask the various operations of the holy spirit for yourselves and your seed. This is a promise in the covenant. "I will pour out my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. They shall spring up as the grass, and as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord and surname himself by the name of Israel.

Ask that the *spirit* by his saving influence may dwell in you, and be as a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life; that *He* would enlighten, quicken, guide, comfort, and seal you; that he would strengthen you to perform the duties of the covenant, to prize its privileges, and to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless.

Ask that you may be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God; that you may be begotten unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Ask that your will may be resigned to the will of God & your affections mortified to the world. Ask communion with Christ in his image, righteousness, sonship, and glory.

Ask for such things, as you have need of in this life. Our Savior taught his disciples to pray, "—give us day by day our daily bread." The apostle also directs us "in every thing by prayer and supplication to make our request known to God." Our wants of every kind are to be spread before God in prayer.

Ask that the Holy Spirit may conduct you into the divine presence, teach you how to pray and what to pray for; that he may give you faith, help your infirmities, and make in,

tercession for you ; that he may produce in you the spirit of adoption, whereby you may cry, *Abba Father* ; may go to God with all your cares and wants as children to a wife and tender father.

Pray with a free and noble spirit ; with a heart enlarged with benevolence to all mankind. Pray that the promise of the Father to the Son may be accomplished ; that Christ may have the heathen for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession ; that the Gospel in its purity and saving influence may spread throughout the world, and the ends of the earth see the salvation of God.

And now, my bretheren, let us make a brief reflection on what we have been considering. Does the God of glory permit, and ever require us, the children of apostate Adam, to draw near to him with all our cares and wants ? Does he with a heart full of tender mercy, invite each in this assembly, to ask him to bestow on us the blessings, which we need ? Let us then, with that freedom, which his royal bounty encourages, make known our requests to God. Pray for those spiritual blessings, to which your attention has been directed. Every possible encouragement is

given to seek the benefits of the gospel. If any man lack wisdom, or any other good, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not. Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. Pray with importunity. Let no discouragement prevail on you to give over the pursuit of those blessings, which are contained in the covenant of grace. Fill your mouth with arguments. Come in the way prescribed in the gospel. Rest on the merits of Christ. Forfake your sins. Be watching at the gates of the Lord, and waiting at the posts of his doors. No one shall seek in vain. You shall know, if you follow on to know the Lord.



 S E R M O N II.

GOD WILL NOT FORSAKE HIS PEOPLE.

HEBREWS, xiii. 5.

FOR HE HATH SAID, I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE, NOR FORSAKE THEE.

THE apostle, in the close of his excellent epistle to the Hebrews, exhorts them to the dilligent discharge of the several christian duties. Among other duties he urges them to refrain from covetousness, and to be content with their condition. 'Let your conversation be without covetousness.' *'Covetousness is idolatry.'* It is to place our affections and hopes on the creature instead of the Creator. This is a high crime against the majesty of heaven. To this vice you are much exposed; you must therefore, guard against it. However strongly you are urged to it by your corrupt propensities, or by temptations arising from your outward circumstances; still you must abstain from it, not only for a while, in some fright or pang of affection, but in your whole conversation.—

“Be content with such things, as ye have.”
How needful, how amiable is contentment. How happy it is, to be pleased with all, that God does, not only in the general disposals of his providence, which extends to every event, but in particular, as it respects our own circumstances. It is pleasant, to be satisfied with the provision, protection, and government of a most wise, powerful, sovereign, gracious, and faithful God. How much of heaven there in contentment.—And yet, with how much difficulty is it attained. Many things concur to disturb the passions and disquiet the mind. The disorder of the heart too easily receives the impression of external circumstances, and makes the efforts of the adversary unhappily successful to discompose our minds.

Our text is introduced, as a motive to contentment. ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ There is no need of the least discontent or uneasiness. These are unreasonable and unbecoming. Covetousness is vile and base. It cannot be otherwise, since God hath offered and engaged to you that good, which is adequate to the capacity of your soul and can satisfy all the desires of your heart.

It is necessary, right, and fit, that you

should be contented, for you have the sum of all good in the presence and enjoyment of God. Cannot you be satisfied with him, who is *all in all*? Indeed, if you have his presence and favor, it is impossible you should desire or hope for any higher good. This favorable presence is not only exhibited, but freely offered to you. Upon your cordial choice of this good, and your acceptance of it according to the tenor of the covenant, it is firmly secured to you. To those, who thus chuse and accept God, he says, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* The good thus ensured is complete, so that nothing is wanting; and has all possible security in the promise and faithfulness of God.—*He* hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee—who hath said?—*He*, who spake the world into being, who created the heavens and the earth by the word of his power; who governs and disposes all things.—*He*, who is the eternal *I AM*; the unchangeable portion and inheritance of his people.—*He*, who cannot lie, whose counsel shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure.—*He*, who will perform the thing, that is gone out of his mouth, tho the mountains pass away and the hills be removed. *He*, with whom there is no varia-

bleness nor the shadow of turning—*He, hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*— These words, proceeding from our God and Savior, are great and precious words. They flow from rich grace. They contain an inestimable treasure. The good contained in them can never be measured. It has heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, which exceed our comprehension.

I will never leave thee.—I will always be with thee. I will seasonably and effectually provide for thee. When thou passest through the waters, they shall not overflow thee ; and through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee.” No hurt, no evil shall come nigh thee. Mine eye shall ever be on thee ; my kindness ever extended towards thee.

But who are the favored persons, to whom these great and important words are spoken ? They are addressed to him, whom God loved when he passed by and saw him polluted in his blood ; whom God called in righteousness ; to the humble and contrite soul ; to him, who is called by the name, and trembleth at the word of God. These words are addressed to

the soul, whom God hath made willing in the day of his power ; willing to accept of Christ in all his offices, as prophet, to teach ; as priest, to atone and intercede, and as king, to rule and reign over him.

God will never leave him, whom he hath given to his Son ; and in whom his spirit dwells ; who has given up himself to fear, trust and obey him, as he is revealed in his word. —Such a one, whether old or young, male or female, rich or poor, God will never leave nor forsake.

But where hath God made this promise to individual Christians ? Where hath he said to every believer, “ I will never leave nor forsake thee ? ” —He said it to every believer, when he said it to his saints and children in former times. He spake to thee, Oh humble, penitent soul, when he said to Josphua, “ I will be with thee ; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee ; ” —when he said to Jacob, “ I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest ; — for I will not leave thee. ” —The promises made to any saint, are intended for all in like circumstances ; they were made and written for our instruction, that we thro patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

The general doctrine, that I shall draw from the text is this;—*God has promised and engaged, that he will never leave nor forsake his children.*

Hearken, all ye that fear God; hear what the Lord is now speaking to you from heaven — Children of God, attend to the kind words, the gracious promises, which your heavenly Father delivers to you from the place of his holiness.—Happy men; happy women; highly favored of the Lord. Here is a promise always seasonable; always suited to comfort, support, and refresh a child of God. This, as well as the other promises, is *yea* and *amen* in Christ.—Do you ask what is implied in this promise? It may be answered,—that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost will never depart from the glorious relations; in which they stand to believers.

It is a sad truth, that man has fallen from a holy, happy, and glorious state. All mankind in Adam departed from the service, and lost the favor of God. They forfeited happiness, and fell under the curse of the divine law. They lost their title to good, and plunged themselves in all evil. God withdrew, and refused to treat with man in a way of favor ac-

according to the first covenant; but held himself bound, as it were, to deal with him according to the tenor of that covenant, and to execute the penalty annexed to the breach of it. Thus man, according to the rule of strict justice, became hopelessly and everlastingly undone.

But, forever adored be rich and sovereign grace, there is a way found out for their relief; a door of hope opened by another and better covenant.

The miserable condition of man was foreseen from eternity. The almighty Father proposed, the Son accepted, and the Holy Ghost consented to a new and glorious plan for the salvation of man. They agreed to redeem him from his estrangement and ruin, and to restore him to everlasting blessedness in the service and enjoyment of God. The Father gives the Son to be a sacrifice and atonement for guilty rebels, for traitors to his crown and dignity. And not only so, but he gives his Son, and himself and Spirit with him, to a ransomed seed. These things, which were decreed from eternity, were actually done in the fullness of time.

The Lord Jesus Christ takes upon him the awful charge. He, as their head and sure-

ty, *does and suffers* whatever was necessary for their recovery.

The Holy Spirit undertakes to apply the redemption purchased by Christ. By him the revelation of God's will was made to the patriarchs, prophets, and holy men of old; and to the apostles of Jesus Christ after his ascension. Since then the holy spirit has manifested the grace of the gospel to the hearts of sinners, by his influence attending the preached word, and the other means of religion. By him the mind is enlightened; the sinner awakened, convinced, humbled and converted. By his influence the heart becomes a temple of the Lord Jehovah.

In a humbled and sanctified heart, God dwells, in a threefold relation. God the Father bears the relation of a father; and as such pities, relieves, instructs, corrects, and saves his children. God the Son sustains the relation of Mediator and Savior. God the Holy Ghost sustains the relations of sanctifier, guide, and comforter. In this promise, "I will never leave nor forsake thee," it is implied, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost will never withdraw from the true believer in any of these glorious relations. The Father will always be

a kind Father and faithful friend. The Son, as Mediator, will ever continue to be the medium, thro which mercy may, consistently with the divine perfections, flow to penitent sinners. In him a way is opened into the holiest, and shall never be shut against them. God is ever ready thro Christ to hear their cries; his heart is towards them for good. The Holy Spirit will always be a communicator, of the treasures of holiness and grace from God to believers.

The promise in the text implies that God will never take his holy Spirit from believers; that he will not withdraw his kindness from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail; that he will baffle the powers of hell, and the temptations arising from the world without and from their corruptions within, so that they shall not finally draw them from their duty, or deprive them of happiness in heaven.—It is implied, that God will be their everlasting portion; that they shall be fully and richly supplied in him; that he will be their *all in all*.

In the promise it is likewise included, that God will never change his purpose concerning them. The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but his kindness shall never depart from them. Having loved them, he

will love them to the end. Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate them from the love of God. Neither God's love to them, nor their love to God shall ever fail.—These are truly great and important things. But what security is there for the full performance of them to believers? Is there any solid and unshaken foundation to hope, that the promises made to the saints will be accomplished?—There is indeed security; there is a foundation of hope more immoveable, than the foundations of the mountains. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but the word of God shall not pass away.

Men may promise, and fail. Falshood, ignorance, or weakness may prevent the performance of their promise. But none of these can prevent the punctual accomplishment of the promises of God. He is possessed of absolute and infinite wisdom, power, and faithfulness. God is Jehovah; and is known by the glorious attribute of faithfulness. The saints of God declare with one voice, that not one thing has ever failed, which the Lord our God promised.

Further; as if all this were not sufficient,

Christ becomes our security for the performance of the promises. All the promises of God are in him *yea* and in him *amen*, to the glory of God the Father by them, that believe.

In order to set this in a clear point of light, two things will be considered.

1. The promise is made sure to Christ for all his seed. They are insured to him in the covenant of redemption, the conditions of which he has completely fulfilled ; so that the performance of the promises is, as it were, a matter of debt to Christ. The good of believers is included in the promise of the Father to the Son. Christ has performed the conditions of the covenant of redemption ; has satisfied divine justice, finished the work he undertook, and so become mighty to save.

2. Believers are united to Christ. There is an intimate union between Jesus Christ and believers ;—and this union is the security of the promise. You will perhaps enquire, what is the union, with which the security of the promise is so connected ? I reply ; the union between Christ & believers is a great mystery. Believers are said to be ingrafted into Christ ; to be in Christ, and he in them. Christ is in believers by his spirit. “Hereby we know that

we are in him and he in us, *because he hath given us of his Spirit.*—The believer is in Christ by faith. By faith also Christ is in believers.—When Christ is said to be in believers, we are to understand it in reference to sanctification. When believers are said to be in Christ, it is to be understood in reference to justification.

The relation, or union between Christ & believers is compared to the relation between a husband and wife, between the head and members, between root and branches.—Thus believers are united to Christ. This is the security of the promises. In Christ the promises are *yea* and *amen*; that is, certain, immutable and infallible.

If you would further see the security of the promises, you may consider the affection of God to them. His free love and sovereign grace dictated the promise, changed their hearts to love him, & inclined and enabled them to rest on his faithfulness and power.

The counsel and determination of God are a full security of the promises. These are made to the vessels of mercy, to the elect subjects of eternal glory. God hath chosen and appointed them to eternal life. He hath pre-

destinated them to it ; and he will not leave them, till they are brought into the possession of it. He designs that they shall be forever with him in heaven. Therefore he will not suffer their enemies to spoil them, nor to hinder them in their journey to the kingdom of glory. Satan, the world and their own corruptions do their utmost to seperate them from God. But it is all in vain. God is the Lord; *he* changes not. Therefore his children are not consumed.—We see then that the promises of God are secure, and may be firmly relied on, without danger of disappointment.

We proceed to consider the privileges of those, to whom the promises are made.—They are defended from their spiritual enemies and upheld under the burden of cares and sorrows, which oppresses them. Their own corruptions, impetuous as they are, shall never overcome them. They shall never fall a sacrifice to *him*, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour. On the promise are founded all their hopes and expectations of escaping the dangers and difficulties, that attend them, and of obtaining heavenly rest at last.

Tho' all others forsake them, God will

not. Believers may be left of all outward comforts. But God will never leave nor forsake them. Father & mother may leave them. Death may carry them into the land of silence, so that the places which once knew them shall know them no more. But *he*, who is the Father to the fatherless, will never leave them. This comforted David in his afflictions. “When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.”

Lover and friend may be removed into darkness, the companion of the bosom and desire of the eyes may leave them. But Jesus will be their bridegroom; the desire of all nations will never forsake them.—They may, indeed, be so far left, as to complain of their deep distress; supposing, and concluding that there is none, who will have compassion on them; that all men have forsaken them. Yet they are not desolate and forsaken. They have a God, that is always near to compassionate and relieve them.

Apparent, and even real friends may stand aloof from them in the times of their distress; or they may aggravate their troubles and heap up hard sayings against them; so that

their nearest friends may all be turned into miserable comforters. But God is their immoveable, unchangeable friend; and they endure these troubles, not because they are forsaken; but because they need them.

We sometimes see intimate friends become estranged from each other, because they happen to be of different sentiments about indifferent things. Good men may fall under the suspicion of apostacy; may fall under the harshest censures of cruel and unreasonable men. But the Lord is an unchangeable friend, and will never leave them. Tho' all the world withdraw their kindness and their justice too; yet still they have a God, who will assert their injured innocence. He will bring them forth to light, and they shall see his righteousness. This is a happy privilege and support to an oppressed believer.—We are ready to say, such a one is happy in the multitude of friends, who are always devising kind and friendly offices to him. But we have much more reason to say, “happy is the man whose God is the Lord.”

Another privilege of believers is, that in God they have all that good supplied, of which they can be deprived. God is the fountain of good. Every thing is *that* and

that only to us, which God makes it. Now if the streams fail, the fountain remains? Does the creature grow faint, and weary of hardness? *Yet the Creator fainteth not nor is weary.* Do creatures change? He, who is God over all, changes not. Indeed his providence is to be viewed and acknowledged in the removal of temporal comforts. When the conduct of believers is displeasing to God, he sometimes sets their friends against them, or lays them in the grave. But in this the believer is corrected, as a child. It is the sure friend, the kind father, that does not spare the child. God uses the rod; he chastens his children, for this very reason,—because he will not cast them off, but designs to make them heirs. The Lord will withhold no good thing from his saints. Therefore he correcteth them. This is the good thing, which at present they need. To withhold it might be taken as a mark of enmity; “he that spareth his rod hateth his son;” and would be a breach of the promise, “if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod.”

Whatever men intend by the afflictions, which they occasion to believers, God means them for good. As they come from him, they are dispensations of love, and intended to

make them more holy, more fit for the service and enjoyment of God.

Another privilege of God's people is, that their sins, confessed and watched against, will not provoke God to leave them. Their sins may call for stripes and their iniquities for the rod; yet he pardons their transgressions, and buries their sins in perpetual oblivion. Tho in a little wrath he hides his face from them for a moment; yet with everlasting kindness he will have mercy on them. "I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth. For the spirit should fail before me, and the soul, which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him.—I have seen his way, and will heal him. I will lead him also, and will restore comforts to him.—I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him, that is far off, and to him, that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him. "This, Oh, this is a wonderful privilege.—Humble believers, who sin every day, and in every action and thought, do really esteem it as such. The best offered in many things, and in all come short of God's glory. But they have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. His blood

cleanseth from all sin. He is a propitiation for their sins.—If God should leave his people, because of their sins; alas, what would become of them? what wretched creatures would they be?—“If thou, Lord, should mark iniquity, Oh Lord, who should stand?”—But God gives them repentance; and Christ prays that their faith may not fail. He sends his spirit to support and direct them. Even when they are sensible of no comfort, when they feel themselves lost, as in a wilderness; when they wander in darkness and desertion; even then the Lord shall be their light, their life, and their glory. Now they shall seek him; and now they shall find him. They shall trust in him and be enabled to follow him, tho with a heavy heart. The work of sanctification shall be carried on; they shall be made more humble, watchful, and holy. He will not take his spirit from them. He has effectually called them; and his gifts and callings are without repentance.

God will not leave his people in times of temptation. Sin shall not have dominion over them. He will make a way for their escape. “For this deliverance every one, that is Godly shall pray unto him.”

God will not leave his faints in the hour of death. This is a dark and difficult hour. Death is the *king of terrors*. Even innocence reluctantly undergoes dissolution. How much more would a soul under the load of guilt, tremble at the thought of appearing before the awful Majesty of heaven? The very thought is dreadful and overwhelming. But the mere separation of the soul from the body is very grievous and afflicting. For the soul to leave the body, and to go into a state, where it never was before, is very painful to think upon. It excites anxiety and grief. There is a loathsomeness, an unwillingness to leave the desirables of life, to take so long a farewell of the body and of all its intimate acquaintances. The vale of death is full of shadows and gloom.— But the believer finds joy and support in this promise, “I will never leave thee.” God is with him. He makes him willing to die; yea, to cry out with earnestness, “why are thy chariot wheels so long coming?”

When the soul of a believer is separated from his body, God does not forsake it; but, through the instrumentality of angels, conveys it to the kingdom of his glory. Then believers shall be forever with the Lord;—

happy in the presence and enjoyment of God. Humble saints may draw back and be afraid to entertain a tho't of a privilege so great. To look for such depths of goodness and mercy seems presumption.—Stop, my dear friends ; let your modesty and humility express itself as freely as you will respecting your own merit. But let the promise have its full scope. God is as able to make good the whole, as a small part of it. His grace glories in doing for us more, than we can ask or think. You may therefore expect, according to the promises, to be eternally blessed in the full and perfect enjoyment of God. Shortly you must put off these tabernacles of clay. You must die as well as others. But you shall never be forsaken. You shall soon receive an inheritance among them, that are sanctified. By being freed from sin you shall be made fit for this inheritance. The principles and habits of sin shall be subdued, mortified, and done away. With sin, sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and all tears shall be wiped from your eyes. Eternal peace shall succeed your present warfare ; eternal rest your present labor. You shall no more be open to Satan's fiery darts ; no more

suffer the hidings of God's face; no more be wearied with dullness and indifference in God's service; no more interruption in the work of praise; you shall rest not day and night, saying, holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. You shall be forever viewing and admiring the excellencies and perfections of God; his nature and works, especially his glory as displayed in the stupendous work of redemption.

Oh, how great is the grace and condescension of God towards the children of apostacy! He has in a wise and wonderful way provided for the relief of the miserable, and for the pardon of the guilty. He offers salvation to all, and actually takes a number into his special favor, and promises them everlasting blessedness in heaven. "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldst thus visit him?"—What powerful inducement have believers to hate sin and love holiness. Sin is against God the Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, Comforter, Friend, and eternal portion. Oh, believer, only see it, and you will abhor it.

I close with a word to those, who are strangers to God, and in love with sin. My dear

friends, You see the blessedness of those, who are friends to God. Would you then be blessed?—Seek blessedness in God thro Jesus Christ. There are good tidings for you. It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. There is pardon, and peace, and grace, and glory to be had from God by union to Christ. Seek therefore to be united to him. Christ is the only medium, thro which the mercy of God flows to sinners. He is the only one, who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. Embrace him as he is offered in the Gospel, and you shall be happy forever. May God grant this to us all thro Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever,

A M E N.



 S E R M O N III.

 THE GOSPEL INVITATION.

MATTHEW xi. 28.

*COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN,
AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.*

THE speaker of these words is Jesus Christ. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. He it is, that cometh from Edom, with died garments from Bozrah. This is he that is glorious in his apparel travelling in the greatness of his strength. This is he that speaketh in righteousness, and is mighty to save.—This divine person is here presented in the power of his commission and in the glory of his office. He gives a most gracious call to poor sinners; invites their attendance on a most comfortable duty, and encourages them with a promise of rest.

Who is it that gives this call?—He, to whom all things are delivered by the Father; who is sufficient to accomplish all his promises and to make good what he hath said.

But whom does he call?—Such, and all such, without exception, as are weary and heavy laden.

To what does he call them?—To *himself*, the only happifying object, with a precious promise, that he will give them rest.

Attend, dearly beloved, to the language of our great high priest. Hearken especially, ye poor sinners, that are groaning under a sense of your bondage. Come unto me, saith He, all sinners of all ages, ranks, and sexes; whoever you are,—that labor, that feel the dreadful burden of sin, and are reaching after liberty.—And are heavy laden; whose burden exceeds your strength; who cannot stand under the weight of sin and wrath, that lies upon you. Come unto *me*. You are looking here and there for relief; but cannot find it. Don't lie down discouraged, as if there were no help for you. I am appointed of my Father to be the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*. Renounce, therefore, all the other hopes and helps, and come to me, as a faithful high priest and prevalent intercession.—And I will give you rest;—this is my office. I am able and willing to do it. I will give satisfying rest to your souls. You have sought relief in other things, and have

failed. Come to me, and you shall not be disappointed. Whatever discouragements your enemy, or your own heart suggests ; yet come unto me, and your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and your present trouble into everlasting consolation.

The general doctrine which the text contains, is this. Christ graciously invites weary and heavy laden sinners to come to him ; and has given his sure promise, that all who come shall find rest.

The primitive state of man was a state of rest in God. God is the chief good. He is a portion adequate to the desires of the soul. In serving and enjoying him perfectly, the immortal soul has perfect felicity.—By his apostacy from God, man lost his *rest* ; he departed from the centre of blessedness. Man, that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble. While he continues in his apostate sinful state, he continues in a miserable state. Sin will procure sorrow. The world worships honor, wealth, and pleasure. As these cannot give rest to the soul, it will remain in an uneasy, wretched state.

The immortal mind can find no rest, real, permanent rest, but in God. Therefore

the discovery of a way, in which we may return to God, is the highest display of the divine goodness. God, in the person of his Son, has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Jesus, having opened a way for reconciliation, is bringing it about by the dispensation of the gospel. Oh, how admirable this gospel is ;—tho but little regarded by apostate men. Jesus invites miserable sinners to come unto him.—It was said to one earnestly crying after Jesus, “be of good comfort ; rise, he calleth thee.” So may I say to every soul in this assembly, that is distressed and burdened with sin. Don’t despair. Rise ; he calleth thee. He sends his ministers with this call. He sets before you an open door. Oh, how should this engage your attention ! Oh, how should this encourage you to come without delay, believe in him, and rest on him alone for salvation !

Dost thou labor ? Art thou heavy laden ? Dost thou feel thyself utterly lost ; and, in thyself and as to all other creatures, hopeless and helpless ? Then thou art the person whom Jesus calls. The call is indeed to all, where the gospel comes. Souls stained with sin, diseased, and guilty, are invited to come and be

healed.—But it is especially directed to such, as find themselves under an impossibility of attaining rest by the law ;—to such, as are brought to a sense of their guilt and danger, and the necessity of divine grace to save them. To such as these the call is especially directed. There are three things, under which these persons labor and are heavy laden.

1. The guilt and power of sin. The terrors of the Almighty have brought the soul to labor under a sense of guilt. It has heard and been enabled to apply to itself such words, as these, “the soul, that sinneth, shall die. The wages of sin is death.” Therefore, saith the soul, all the rest I shall ever find in sin will be death,—eternal death.

2. The law causes labor to the soul. The convinced soul flies to the works of the law for peace and salvation. Here it seeketh rest, but findeth none. When the commandment comes, sin revives. The soul finds itself condemned for not continuing to do all things, which are written in the moral law.—Hence it is weary of seeking rest by self righteousness. The person sees the defilement of his best services, and feels that all his righteousness is as filthy rags.

3. Selfsufficiency. He labors to weariness in his endeavors to obey the gospel. He strives to cast off the burden of sin, and to receive Christ by faith and love. In the midst of these endeavors, he sees himself guilty because of unbelief, and condemns himself for not believing.

Is this your condition? Arise, then, the master calleth you. To you is the word of salvation sent. You are the lost sheep, to whom the gospel must be preached. Come to Christ for righteousness and life, and you shall find rest to your souls. Christ glories in his office, which leads him to save such as you. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me. He hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of prisons to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord;—to comfort all that mourn; to give unto them that mourn in Zion beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." The rest promised is a full deliverance from that labor, commotion, trouble, grief, and fear, with which thou hast been wearied. It is a sweet tranquility of mind

in the enjoyment of God here and hereafter.

Every sinner, thus distressed, hath a gracious call to come to Christ. "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely."—The reasons, why the call is especially directed to such, as these, are,

1. Because these are, in a sense, prepared to accept the call. Others can be contented without Christ and his salvation. But these must have them. They feel the want, the pressing necessity of a Savior. The call of Christ is therefore a welcome, joyful sound.

2. Christ calls these in particular, because of his merciful compassionate disposition towards the distressed.—"In that he himself hath suffered, he is able to succor them that are tempted.—We have not an high priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one, who can have compassion on the ignorant, and them, that are out of the way."

Indeed, every lost sinner hath a promise of rest upon his coming to Christ. "Isaiah lv. Incline your ear and come unto me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant. Rev. xxii. The spirit and the bride say, come; and let him, that is

athirst, come ; and whosoever will, let him come, and drink of the water of life freely."

These calls are given to finners, because they are endued with reason, and are therefore wrought upon in a rational way. They act for an end ; and therefore, to move them to act, the end is proposed.—The ultimate reason why the calls are given by Christ is because the rest of finners is pleasure to him. When he sees the travail of his soul in the salvation of men, he rejoices and is satisfied.—Let us make a few practical reflections.

1. There are none, that need rest so much, as poor finners. It is true, multitudes do not feel their need of it, and so care little about it. Yet to those, who apprehend their condition according to truth, the proposal of rest is a most welcome proposal. To others the whole contrivance for man's redemption is needless and trifling. In their opinion it little concerns them ; therefore they exercise their thoughts but little about it.

2. The ordinary way to bring finners to true peace and safety is the *ministerial call*. Christ, having purchased the blessings of the gospel and ascended into heaven, hath sent

forth his servants in his name, to publish the good tidings to a guilty world. This consideration demands the thankfulness of all, who enjoy the gospel, and strongly urges compassion to those, who want it, and are therefore perishing for lack of vision.

3. The subject affords matter of terror to such, as continue in sin—to those, who have made a covenant with death and are in agreement with hell; who have made lies their refuge, and under falsehood have hid themselves. Be assured, God will put a vast difference between you and his own people in the day of retribution. If you are then found in a state of sin, he will lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet. The scourge shall pass thro you; then shall you be trodden down, and your refuge of lies shall be swept away,—Altho you see no such things now; yet in its season you shall see it. You may ask, who are in danger of such sorrowful things? I answer—They are marked out in the word of God. They are such, as have had true rest discovered to them, but would not receive it, nor hearken to the gospel invitation. They are such, as go on in sin, are drunk with prosperity, despise the Lord of

Hosts, and are senseless and secure in wickedness. They are such, as have been brought to a sense of their danger, but have continued to seek rest by works of righteousness, and trust to the power of their own free will to enable them to repent and believe.

4. The subject affords encouragement to weary and heavy laden sinners; to such as never dared to come, to Christ. Oh, my friends, it is encouraging to realize, that Christ still thinks of you, still calls you, and kindly moves upon you by his spirit. You are not only on this side eternal woe, but you enjoy the means of life and blessings. Jesus calleth you,—he calleth you as it were by name, describing you by your present needy state;—"come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden."

5. Such as have come to Christ, and yet want rest, may derive encouragement and comfort from what has been said. Consider, mourning believers, that rest is promised. Consider by whom it is promised. Consider that the rest promised is a full deliverance from all trouble, grief, and fear; a sweet tranquility of mind arising from communion with God in Christ begun here and perfected hereafter.

“How shall I know that I have come to Christ?” Have you seen and chosen Christ according to the divine word?—Have you seen and loved the truths of the gospel concerning him? Have you abandoned all other hopes, and do you cleave to him in the way of his appointment? Do you depend on him, and him only for everlasting rest?

“But how shall I know that I come in God’s appointed way?”—Have you an abiding sense of your own unworthiness and insufficiency?—Do you feel yourself putting forth acts of dependance and love?—These things may show that you have come according to God’s appointment.

“But I am afraid I come for some *bye end*.”—A *bye end* is such, as God hath not propounded. Rest in sin is a *bye end*.—A desire to be free from sin is a right end. Those who are free from terror, and yet find weariness in God’s work, and are burdened in the discharge of duty, ought to apply to Christ, that this yoke may be rendered easy and his burden light.

I proceed to give a word of exhortation

to all, who hear me, this day ; first to care-
less sinners.—What is the reason, that the
gospel, which bringeth life and immortality to
light, is received with such indifference ?
Men prize their farms and their relations above
Christ. They are alive to other things ; but
they are dead to such things, as the gospel
offers. They have no sense of the wrath of
God, the curse of the law, or their bondage
to sin and Satan.—Study, therefore, the spirit-
uality, extent, and holiness of the divine law.
Look over the commands. See what they re-
quire, & what they forbid respecting God, your
neighbor, and your own souls. Think of the
curse denounced against every one, who con-
tinueth not in all things written in the book
of the law, to do them. Think of the impos-
sibility of fulfilling the whole law, or of avert-
ing its curse.—Fly to Christ, lay hold on the
hope set before you ; come speedily to the Sav-
ior ; his yoke is easy and his burden light.

In the next place, I would exhort heavy
laden sinners to come to Christ according to
his invitation. The grace of God is offered
freely to sinners. You are afraid to venture
upon grace, because you are guilty and mil-
erable. But, my friends, the offers of grace

are absolutely and perfectly free. Grace proceeds from the free choice of God. "He will be gracious on whom he will be gracious, and he will show mercy on whom he will show mercy." It is not from what he wants of any of his creatures. He has no need of the love, fear, or service of any of his creatures. Nothing led to show mercy, but his own sovereign will, his own infinite goodness. No desert or worth of ours moved him to bestow grace upon us. We did not so much, as desire it. God is found of them that sought not for him. He says, behold me, behold me, to those, who are not called by his name,

God is liberal in the bestowment of his grace. He is rich in mercy. Thro the great love, wherewith he loved us, he hath given us as a gift worthy the King of Kings, even his only begotten son.

Consider further, that God offers his mercy without money and without price. He requires nothing in us to purchase it. Self denial and a sense of our own sinfulness and vileness is all the price we are to bring. And that too he works in us by his spirit.—He neither expects nor requires any reward afterwards. He gives freely, expecting nothing

again. The service we owe him is our own interest, not his.

Consider the sincerity of Christ in his offers of mercy. He does not say one thing and mean another, but is most true and sincere. This he declares in his word; and this he declares by his ministers, who with much earnestness invite, and persuade sinners to come to Christ. He hath enforced the duty of coming to him by the divine authority in a command. "This is his commandment, that we believe on Jesus Christ." He hath denounced dreadful threatenings against all, that will not come to him and accept offered rest.—Besides, he hath paved the way to rest, and purchased the offers of it by his own blood. Nothing can evidence his sincerity if this does not.—He is glad, when any sinner accepts his offer.—There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents.

His patience and long suffering towards sinners, evinces his sincerity. He bears with them all their lives; and to the last moment is ready to accept them.—No one, that ever came however late, has been, rejected. Let their affronts, indignities, and abuses have been ever

so long and great; still, if they believe, all is forgiven and forgotten. Christ never cast out one, that came to him for help.

Jesus is able to accomplish his promises. His word is with power. He hath authority to do all that he hath said.—This is a principal motive to accept an offer. Let no carnal confidence deceive you. If you trust to an arm of flesh, you shall assuredly fall.

There is the influence of the spirit, which accompanies the offer, to enable you to accept of it.

Consider that the whole business of salvation is carried on in a way of free grace. 'Tis a contrivance of infinite wisdom, which purposely excludes all boasting. Heaven is a gift; and every step to it is of free grace. Election, redemption, regeneration, justification, and adoption are all of free grace. If you will not comply with this scheme of free grace, let me entreat you to remember, that Christ will hereafter speak in a different manner to you. You will hear him speak those dreadful words, “depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.”—Oh, therefore, come to a conclusion; determine and fix in your mind what you will do. And let me repeat, what

you have so often heard, come to Christ,—Oh, hearken to his voice, and your souls shall live.

S E R M O N IV.

FUTURE HAPPINESS AND MISERY.

LUKE XVI. 25.

BUT NOW HE IS COMFORTED, AND THOU ART TORMENTED.

THE parable, of which these words are a part, contains a weighty instruction concerning that future state, to which we are all hastening. Two persons are here described; the *rich man*, and *Lazarus*. The former had a plentiful and sumptuous table, and was attired with princely apparel. He seems easy and happy in the enjoyment of all, that his heart desired. His friends and acquaintance admired his delicate and princely fare, and probably envied his happiness. But did his noble attire and sumptuous living release him from the grave; from the place of silence, the land of darkness,—the gnawing of worms?—No. He died.

Lazarus was a poor beggar. He had scarcely victuals to support life, and clothes to keep him warm. He is too feeble to come to the rich man's gate, and is therefore laid there. He desires to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the *rich man's* table. But the dogs are more forward to grant him relief than *he*. Lazarus dies also.—And he, who appeared friendless in life, had at death a host of angels to guide and guard him safely to his heavenly home. The event proves Lazarus to be a righteous man. Therefore death was his privilege ; his release from pain ; the end of his wearisome pilgrimage ; his freedom from sin and sorrow.

The rich man was selfish and wicked. His heart was so hard, that he neither pitied nor relieved Lazarus, the servant of the most high God.—He dies and is buried. 'Tis likely his rich brethren buried him in great state, and then are easy, hoping God is as favorable to him in another world, as it appeared he had been in this.—But, alas, where is his soul ? The next thing we hear of him is, “in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment.” He who was lately blessing himself in his abundance, is now

gone to that darksome abode, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth forever.

Two things may here employ our thoughts; the future happiness of the righteous, and the future misery of the wicked.

1. One truth, which our Savior teacheth us in the text is, that the righteous are happy after death.

Tho the character of Lazarus is not particularly described, it being sufficient to show the selfishness of the rich man to say that he refused relief to one in distress; yet we are told that Lazarus was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom, and afterwards that he was comforted and made happy, while the rich man was tormented. So that the issue proves Lazarus to be a good man.

We may observe here, that the death of the body does not put an end to the man. The soul, tho separated from the body, still exists. It survives the body, and will live forever. The soul is a spiritual substance, endowed with immortality. This is clearly taught in the scriptures, and has been acknowledged by the wisest in all nations.

We observe further, that there is after death a separation between the souls of the regenerate and the unregenerate, between the good and the bad. Those, who have lived together in this life, as husbands and wives parents and children, friends and neighbors; those who have eaten at the same table, lodged in the same bed, heard the same sermons and enjoyed the same sabbaths, may and must be separated. Hypocrites and sincere converts converse together and are not distinguished by the scrutiny of man; but they will shortly be known and dealt with suitably to their characters and conduct. Good ministers, who spent their labors and prayers in the service of Christ and for the good of souls, will be shortly separated from those of their people, who turned a deaf ear to the calls of mercy. The one will be destined to honor and blessedness; the other to everlasting shame and despair. So bad ministers, will be shut out from those blessed regions, which their good hearers will inherit.

All good men will be perfectly happy. But still there will be degrees in their happiness. Some will shine as the brightness of the firmament; others as the stars; others as

the fun. So as to the wicked; all will be completely miserable; tho some will be beaten with more stripes, than others; to some, future misery will be more tolerable than to others.

Lazarus in order to be entitled to the comforts of Paradise, was not only poor as to temporal things, but he was poor in spirit; a beggar at the throne of grace; sensible of his dependence; expecting pardon not as a debt, but as a free gift, and deriving all his sufficiency from God.

If it be enquired what are the comforts of the good in a future state;—it is replied,

1. One great comfort to the good man after death is, that he has safely passed thro the dark valley of death. Thro fear of this he had been subject to bondage all his life. But now he hath obtained a complete victory over it. It is an unspeakable comfort to him to think that he shall die no more. The *dark shadow* has passed over him. It is pleasing to look back upon these terrors, which sometimes almost overwhelmed him from the prospect of death and the grave. From these he is now delivered. It is now unspeakably joyful to him to reflect on the power and faithfulness of God, which afforded him inward strength,

while his *outward man* was decaying ; while he was engaging the *king of terrors* ; taking leave of the world and rushing into eternity. Paul, in the anticipation of this triumphant joy, cried out, “Oh death where is thy sting ; Oh grave, where is thy victory ?” what then was the real possession of this joy ?

2. Another comfort of the good man after death is his everlasting freedom from *sin*. This was a clog and hindrance to all his holy exercises. It attended him wherever he went, and whatever he did. It enfeebled him in his best duties, and darkened his brightest hours. When he would do good, evil was present with him. Sin divided & distressed his heart ; diverted his attention in holy exercises ; maimed his exertions ; laid him open to temptations, and led him to do things displeasing to God. It greatly perplexed him, made him loathsome in his own eyes, and caused him to exclaim, “Oh wretched man that I am.”—But now he is free from all this evil. His heart is perfectly centered in God ; he can serve him forever without weariness and enjoy him without interruption.

3. Freedom from the cares of the present life will be a great comfort to the saint in hea-

ven. He will have no need of food, sleep, and clothing. He will consequently be free from all those anxieties, which arise from the want of them; and from the labor necessary to procure them. Sin and sorrow being thus removed, the mind will be serene; the heart delivered and forever free from all sinful affections, turbulent passions, and all the fruits and effects of sin.

4. The happy saint will be free from the snares and temptations of the spiritual enemy, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour. After death, he will disquiet and disturb God's people no more forever. Oh, it will be comfort and joy to be out of the reach of those powers of darkness, which reign in the children of disobedience; to have escaped the destroying influence of principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places.

5. The good man after death will be free from the temptations and snares of a wicked world. Deceitful men can never come to heaven to deceive or disturb them any more.

6. Good people after death will have the perfect enjoyment of themselves. Their minds will be continually in a calm and holy

frame. They will be employed in the immediate service of God; they will be ravished with the radiant beams of his glory, and satisfied with the gracious communication of that light and influence, which is needful for their complete felicity. They will have the most satisfying discovery of divine truth. Doubts and want of establishments are sometimes very perplexing to saints in this life. But then eternal and invisible realities will possess their minds with absolute evidence. An addition to all their comfort will be a full assurance, that it will continue forever.

7. They will be comforted in seeing Jesus; in discovering themselves to be the objects of everlasting love. How was Thomas comforted when Jesus shew him his pierced hands and side. But he will discover to glorified saints greater things, than these. He will open to them the counsels of heaven, concerning the redemption of man; the mysteries of providence; the various ways, whereby he impressed their hearts with their own vileness and the truths of the gospel; subdued their enmity; increased their graces; prepared them for heaven, and finally brought them to glory.

8. Another comfort will be their converse

with angels. Oh, what amazing scenes will open upon the blessed, when they review the ministering care and protection of angels in a great variety of dangers; which they themselves neither saw nor could avoid. They will likewise have a comfortable reception from the gloried saints. How joyful will it be to meet a father, a son; a husband, a wife, kind brothers and sisters, tender mothers, beloved daughters, intimate friends, and desirable neighbors, who have all arrived at heaven before them. Then ministers and people will meet, welcome each other, and rejoice together forever.

But no one can describe the blessedness of heaven. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived the joys, which God hath prepared for those, that love him. Stretch your powers to the uttermost, dwell on the lovely theme constantly and with the greatest engagedness, and you will fall far below any adequate conceptions of heaven.

Let the candidates for glory take courage. You perhaps enjoy but little comfort here. Your corruptions are many; your temper and conduct are uneven. These things, which are a grief & burden to you, cause your enemies

to triumph. The world forfakes you ; a multitude of evils beset you. All looks gloomy, and you are ready to sink under discouragement. But, my friends, take courage and be doing. You shall reap, if you faint not. The crown you run for is of infinite value, and will more than compensate for all your toil and sufferings in the way to it. Stir up the grace, that is in you ; mortify every lust ; bear patiently every burden ; press thro every difficulty ; look to the captain of your salvation. He will be with you, and strengthen you. He will give you the victory, and crown your exertions with everlasting triumph.

We are in the second place to consider the future misery of the wicked. We infer from the text that, while saints are comforted, sinners are tormented. A surprising change takes place with the wicked at death. Their happy days are over. They perhaps had their comforts in this world. Some of them lived in pleasure, and fared sumptuously. Everyone had those things, which he prized more than the pardon of sin, the favor of God, and eternal life. He had been warned of his error and directed to a right conduct. But he consulted the flesh, and neglected the dictates

of his own conscience and the spirit of God.—
 Now he sees, he feels the sad effects of it.
 Lately no arguments could persuade him of
 his danger. But now he needs nothing but
 his own wretched soul to convince him, that
 he is condemned and tormented. What now
 has become of all his fond hopes and vain con-
 fidence? Where is the happiness he boasted
 of? What now does he think of the time he
 has spent in idleness, or in sinful sports? What
 does he think of sabbaths and seasons of grace?
 of his bible and the ordinances of the gospel?
 What does he think of the warnings he has had;
 and the choice he made, when life and death,
 the blessing and curse were set before him?—
 He had his choice; he chose the service of the
 world and his own lusts. Now he feels the sad
 effects of it. Did he choose wisely? Did he
 act as a reasonable, dependant creature ought
 to act? His own free choice hath determined
 the matter against him. His day of grace is
 past. He may and will forever mourn;—but
 it is too late to find relief.—He will remember
 what is past. This will be a source of per-
 petual misery. Oh wretched sinner, the offers
 of mercy were once made to you; but now
 they are over. God showered his blessings up-

on you. But you turned them to wantonness. You were hardened by those things, which should have softened you. You blessed yourself; but now you are full of cursing and bitterness. You had warnings and reproofs. Remember such a sabbath, the minister described your sin and guilt in a clear and affecting manner. He declared your fault. He silenced your objections; he answered those excuses and pleas, with which you had blinded your own eyes. He confuted your groundless confidence; stripped you of your vain hopes, and almost persuaded you to be a Christian.—Remember likewise the kind and friendly counsels of your parents; how they warned you, were in agony for you, and would have plucked you as a brand out of the burning.—Remember how your conscience, and the spirit of God sometimes more severely, sometimes more mildly arrested and convinced you.—Remember your religious privileges. You were a child of the covenant; visibly a child of God.—But now thou art tormented. Sodom and Gomorrah are less miserable, than you. You have no reasons to complain, that God is severe. You received what you chose. You had good things in your life time. You made them

your all.—Your torments are no more, than your wages; no more, than you laboriously and fully earned in your state of trial.

God put it into your power to please and honor him, and to enjoy him forever. But you made yourself your idol. You either wholly neglected the authority of God, or proceeded in direct opposition to it. And all this you did against the light of reason and conscience, and the revealed will of God. Your destruction is of yourself. Oh, how will your misery be increased, when your body is raised and united to your soul. Horror, amazement, and distress will seize you. Your eyes will behold spectacles of woe. Your ears will hear the weeping and wailing of your miserable companions. What fear, what rage, what madness, what revenge will torture your soul. Your body will suffer what it can endure of pain and anguish.

The remembrance of your actual transgressions will harrow up your soul. Your conscience will upbraid you with the blackest ingratitude to God, and the most horrid cruelty to your own soul. Your heart will vent its rage and malice against God, being forever fixed in opposition to all his perfections.

Your hopes are disappointed; your desires crossed, love, joy, and peace forever banished from your breast.

Some persons impeach the holiness and justice of God in the damnation of impenitent sinners. They can't see why such excellent beings should be so severely punished for such small offences. These persons forget the high value, which God sets upon his own glory; they forget the nature of sin, which aims to destroy God's glory. They forget that men are apostates, sunk down in sin and wickedness, and need no other punishment to make them completely miserable, than to be wholly left to themselves.

Men and women had better scrutinize their own ways, and their own deceitful hearts, than to arraign the wisdom and justice of God. The ways of God are but partly known. Those, who think to find out God to perfection, fall infinitely below their mark. What he hath revealed by his works and by his word is sufficient for us. God will soon make it known to all his creatures, that, altho "his way is often in the sea, his path in the deep, and footsteps unknown," yet his throne is founded in righteousness, and justice and judgment are the rule of all his conduct.

S E R M O N V.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

PSALM XXXIV. 8.

TASTE AND SEE, THAT THE LORD IS GOOD.

IN these words David recommends religion to all the world from the incomparable sweetness, which he himself found in it. He had discovered an unfailing source of comfort in God; and he had learned by happy experience that the paths of religion were safe and pleasant. He declares to others the satisfaction, which he derived from religion, and earnestly invites them to an acquaintance with it.

In discoursing on the words of our text, we shall employ our thoughts on the following things. 1. That there is an *infinite good* in God. 2. When persons experience and taste *the truth*, they see and acknowledge that God is infinitely good.

1. There is an infinite good in God.

H

He that is the Original and fountain of being, must also be the fountain of all the good, which the creatures enjoy. Whoever acknowledges the superintendency and observes the disposals of providence, and at the same time takes notice of the present state of the natural and moral world, must be struck with the riches of divine goodness displayed to sinful men. The light of nature, and every man's daily experience shew the beneficence and goodness of God. But in scripture we find the most direct and abundant testimony to the divine goodness. The 136 Psalm, which is more than human eloquence, is wholly taken up in celebrating the goodness of God. It begins with these words; "Oh give thanks to the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever." After having many times celebrated the everlasting mercy of God, he concludes nearly as he begun;—"Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven, for his mercy endureth forever."—In many other Psalms, David is earnest in praising and in exhorting others to praise the goodness of God. "Be thankful unto him and bless his name, for he is good." Jeremiah unites with David in setting forth the goodness of God. "Praise ye the Lord of hosts; for

the Lord is good ; for his mercy endureth forever."

The goodness of God is frequently urged as a constant motive to love, and trust in God at all times. Lament. 3, 25. "The Lord is good to them, that wait for him, to the soul, that seeketh him." David encourageth his heart from a consideration of this amiable attribute of God ; and from it draws successful arguments in pleading with God. Psalm 109. 21. "But do thou for me, oh God the Lord, for thy name's sake ; because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me." In another place he prays, "hear me, oh Lord, for thy loving kindness is good."—All created goodness is only the issue and effect of the infinite goodness of God. But God is good in himself. Our Savior checks the Pharisees for calling him good, and says, there is none good, but *one*, that is, God. They would not own Christ to be God ; and therefore are blamed for calling him good ; because there is none originally, essentially, and absolutely good but God.

God is good in his providence ; and especially in his merciful disposition towards penitent sinners. His pardoning mercy ; his favorable acceptance of believing sinners, his spirit,

his grace, his word, his commands his promises, his threatenings, are all perfectly good. All the dispensations of his providence, however deep and intricate, are infinitely wise and good. He is good, when he gives, and when he takes away; when he smiles, and when he frowns. Oh, if men would taste; would have a realizing sense of divine things, what infinite good would they find in God!

2. I proceed to shew that when men come to have a proper spiritual taste, they see, and are ravished with the goodness of God.

That God is good is a truth open to common observation. Nature dictates, that the Original of Being must be the Original of blessedness. The constant benignity and bounty of God to all his creatures most forcibly evinces this first and most important truth, that God is good, and that his mercy endureth forever.

But those, whose understanding is enlightened and heart purified by the spirit of God, not only speculatively contemplate the goodness of God, but are deeply affected with it; especially as it is manifested in the glorious gospel. They see that the surprizing, astonishing contrivance for man's salvation is found-

ed entirely on the goodness of God. They testify, that under a sense of their guilt and misery, the wrath of God and the curse of the law, they have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope, which the gospel sets before them; that they have, in a clear, supernatural light, seen that the Lord is good. They testify to this truth by their lives;—and many have witnessed to it by their blood, and ventured into eternity in an unshaken confidence of safety and blessedness in God, who is infinitely good in nature and in work. And it is an undeniable fact, that every one, who has with his heart engaged in religion, has seen and tasted peculiar excellencies in God, and has a relish for the exercises, requirements, and joys of that religion, which is contained in the bible. David triumphed in the goodness of God. It swallowed up his thoughts and cares; his hopes and expectations. “He hath made with me an everlasting, covenant ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire.”

Holy Paul was another, who found more good in God, his ordinances and ways, than in any worldly honors, or delights. When

he had once obtained this promise, "my grace is sufficient for thee," he was willing to suffer affliction, and was led to esteem the reproach of Christ great riches.

The goodness of God is testified by the whole catalogue of worthies, recorded in scripture, who chose the service of God, & the good to be found in him before the pleasures of time and sense.

If all would taste ;—would by serious, affectionate meditation, realize to themselves the goodness and loveliness of God, as they are revealed in works and word; they would find their hearts warm within them; while thus musing, the fire of love and devotion would be enkindled.—If men would impartially examine, they would see, that the only durable good is to be found in God. Here is a real, abiding good. All other is imaginary, or at best, fleeting and perishing. Divine good will relish highly in a dying hour, when the horrors, pleasures, and emoluments of this world will be taken from us. Then the faintest glimmering of this good will in excellency and glory infinitely surpass all worldly enjoyments. But above all, when the last trumpet shall sound, and all, both small and great, shall

stand before the tribunal of Christ; then the superiority of this to every other good will plainly and strikingly appear to all. What profit will it then be to reflect on the acquisitions of worldly substance; on houses, farms, riches, on the pleasure we have taken in the indulgence of lust, in evil company, in unrighteous gain? These things will sting like a serpent, and bite like an adder.—But what pleasure will it then be to reflect on the righteousness and mediation of Christ; on our interest in his love; on what he hath done for our souls; and on that, which he will do for us thro eternity! These reflections will bear up our souls, quiet our fears, and encourage our hope, when the great day of the divine wrath is come.

If men would surrender themselves wholly to God, choose him for their portion, trust in his promises, rest in his faithfulness and care, and walk constantly in the ways of God; they would then see an infinite good in the great object of religion. They would find in him all that is needful for them in time and thro eternity.

When persons are truly enlightened, they see an infinite good in Jesus Christ. They find him a Savior every way suited to such

poor, sinful, miserable creatures, as they are. They see, that he is a fit medium of intercourse between a holy God, and guilty, polluted souls. In him they find a righteousness and satisfaction equal to all the demands of law and justice;—in them they find all that light and influence, which the lost and helpless state of man requires. They find him to be bread for the hungry, water for the thirsty, a cordial for the fainting, clothing for the naked, strength for the weak, health for the sick, healing for the broken hearted, joy to mourners, yea, and life to the dead. They learn by happy experience, that the divine Jesus is a merciful high priest, a prevalent intercessor, a holy and faithful guide, and a neverfailing friend.—Oh, that men would taste and see that the Lord is good.

Let us make a few reflections on what has been said.

1. Those, who are strangers to true practical religion, are strangers to the highest good, and to the sublimest happiness. They reject the true enjoyment and felicity of their nature.—Can worldly comforts satisfy, can flesh content you? Alas, what are they, without God? What poor, low, vain, perishing things they are! Is

sin, is vicious pleasure agreeable to you? Can that be good, which God hateth? Can you delight in that, which defiles the soul, and will surely end in misery?—Consider seriously, what is your chief good? Does it consist in creatures? The best of them are miserable comforters, without God. They are broken cisterns;—their existence is derived and dependent. Those that trust in them, shall assuredly be confounded.

2. The opinion, which the unregenerate entertain of God, are false and pernicious. Their understanding is darkened, and the taste of their heart vitiated. They believe the father of lies and their own corrupted hearts, while they suggest, that there is nothing pleasant and satisfying in the ways of religion. They don't believe that the ways of wisdom are pleasantness and peace; that in keeping God's commandments there is a great reward. They are far from believing the declaration of the inspired Paul, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart conceived the things, which God hath prepared for them, that love him.—Oh mistaken creatures,—there is no such pleasure, no such delight, as in a life of real religion. Do you doubt this? I give you the in-

invitation, which Philip gave to Nathaniel, —
“come and see”.

3. The most afflictive scenes, thro which Christians pass, are more pleasurable, than the ways of sin. Afflictions dispensed by God to the truly religious have their bitterness, their sting taken away. To them the commands of God cease to be gracious. Even in repentance for sin they have more pleasure, than ever they had in the commission of it. — Oh, how unreasonable it is, to reject religion, before you have tried it! Only taste and you will see how good Jehovah is, how precious a Savior is, how sweet the impressions of truth, how pleasant the ways holiness; how light afflictions; how easy the yoke of Christ, and how ravishing divine favors. — Oh sinners, I declare what you know to be true; you have never found satisfaction in the service of sin. On the contrary, it hath often put you into terror. Whenever you have realizing views of futurity, sin fills your minds with anxiety. The thoughts of death are unwelcome to you, and the apprehensions of a judgment amazing. — In order to remove all these evils, Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.

4. How delusive is sin, that promises so much good, which it can never give. Sin presents itself to the fancy, as innocent and desirable; so that the wicked sometimes feel a necessity of sinning in order to enjoy some great pleasure. Mistaken souls! I am sure you would enjoy more pleasure in denying your appetites and in resisting temptations.— Carnal pleasures, and vain pastimes, what are they? Do they not sally the soul; damp the spirits, defile the conscience? Is there any thing in sinful courses, which can be called a real good? Are not the sins, to which your hearts most incline, vile and shameful? You are sadly deceived. Try another course, and you will find it so. Sin is most unbecoming in a rational, dependent creature; most ungrateful, as committed against a good and gracious God; and most pernicious, as it brings eternal misery on those who persist in committing it. The sinner's conscience will be forever wounded by that cutting passage in Rom. 6 “what fruit had ye in those things, whereof you are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.”

5. How unfriendly are they, who countenance others in sin! much more they who persuade them into it! All are bound in

their several places and callings to recommend God and his service to others. And every one, who is properly impressed with divine things, will be earnest to gain the hearty consent of all to the truths of the gospel; and to this in particular, that God is good. He will strive to prove to others what unspeakable pleasure is to be found in the service of God. Oh, you, that have tasted that the Lord is good, how ought you to pity your poor, deceived neighbors and friends, that are seeking after happiness, without God. You yourselves were once deceived. You once served divers lusts and pleasures. With what zeal and love should you endeavor to recover those, who are out of the way.

6. How inexcusable are they, who hear the joyful sound of the gospel, in which the goodness of God is most illustriously set forth and yet remain ignorant of it. The works of nature and the dispensations of providence declare the wisdom and goodness of God. But the glory of all his perfections is especially to be seen in the face of Jesus Christ, whom the gospel reveals. Those, therefore, who enjoy this gospel, have all necessary means for knowing the true character of God. How aggravated must

their ruin be, who perish for the abuse of such advantages ! Had they not lived under such light and such gospel privileges, their guilt would have been small compared to what it now is.

It may here be added, that those, who enjoy the gospel, and have under the influence of the Holy Spirit, tasted its blessings, are under the greatest obligations to divine grace. They are bound to prize the gospel according to its worth, and to be thankful to God for his unspeakable goodness. He has bestowed on you the greatest favor, that could possibly be given. Nothing is more valuable, than Jesus Christ ; nothing so valuable, as God himself. In infinite love he hath given *himself*, in his Son, to a lost world. Here is a portion adequate to the desires of the immortal soul. This is a good, which will fill and satisfy the mind of man.—Oh, then give thanks to the Lord ; for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever.

Let me as a minister of Christ, and in his name, tenderly and earnestly exhort you all to abandon the ways of sin, and to learn experimentally the nature and the pleasures of true religion ;—to taste and see, that the Lord

is good.—To continue in sin is to despise the riches of his goodness, patience, and forbearance. Sin is what God hates with everlasting abhorrence. It will forever separate you from God, and consequently from all happiness. It is admirable how sin hath darkened the souls of mankind, how the God of this world hath blinded their eyes, so that they should dare to provoke the wrath of God; so that they should reject the only felicity of their nature, and rush voluntarily into eternal ruin. Is there not a bitterness in sin, both in its nature and consequences? Is it not deformed, base, abominable? Is it not the quintessence of folly and madness?—Look, my friends, upon the effects of sin in this life, at death, at the final judgment, and forever afterwards.—And is it not unreasonable, shameful, ungrateful, and monstrous, still to love and practise sin? Do you choose to retain sins of your heart and life? your pride, your atheism, your unbelief, your hypocrisy, your vain, wicked thoughts? Do you determine to persist in your disobedience to the law and gospel? Oh, consider, weigh, and ponder these things. They are as important as eternal happiness and eternal woe.

Men are too apt to think they cannot be happy unless they possess this world's goods. It is esteemed a great thing to be rich, to have friends, and to be respected among men. He, who hath these, is generally thought to be the happy man. This is a sad mistake. A man possessed of every outward good, but destitute of an interest in the favor of God, is certainly in a miserable condition. He hath no inheritance, but what will presently fail him; and then he is undone forever.

On the other hand, suppose a man has chosen God for his portion, but is destitute of all outward accomplishments;—this is a happy man. God can supply him with friends, with food and raiment, with all the necessaries of life;—and will do it, if it be most for his good. If not, he will bless his poverty and other afflictions to make him more holy, and to hasten him towards his heavenly home. If he can truly say, “the Lord is my portion,” he may well rejoice, that he has the all sufficient good. He may exultingly break forth in the words of Habakkuk, “Altho the figtree shall not blossom neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall

yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stall; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Let me address an exhortation to the several persons in this assembly. Some of you are far advanced in life; have been long sustained by the kind providence of God. Has the kindness of God to you led you to contemplate and admire the goodness and other perfections of his nature? Are you convinced by experience, that there is pleasure to be found in the service of God, and in communion with him?—Or do you live without God in the world? Are you prayerless? Do you neglect communion with God?—If you do, it is a sad mark, that you are unregenerate and have not tasted that the Lord is good.—Oh, be persuaded to come to God in the name of christ, to beg of him to open your eyes and to change your heart;—to bestow on you all that is necessary for time and for eternity. Your end draweth near. Your life will continue but a few years, or a few months, or, possibly, but a few days. Be in earnest, or you are too late. Turn immediately to the Lord, forsake your sins, and the Lord will yet have mercy on you.

My young friends,—if the aged, who are just dropping into the grave, are so hardened, so wedded to their sins, that they will not be reformed ; do you hearken to the voice of reason and scripture, and be persuaded to choose God for your portion. Are you ready to say, you can with safety delay a while ? Ask those who are old, whether they have found the opportunities of becoming religious, increase with age ? Do not their hardness and stupidity administer warning and terror to you ? Their custom of sinning renders them proof against the preaching of the gospel and the other means of grace. Let this consideration, together with the mercies of God and the promises of the gospel awaken your attention to your interest and your duty. Come to a present resolution to seek the Lord *now*, while he may be found ; to call upon him, while he is near ; to accept of Jesus Christ, and to enter in earnest on a life of religion. Then shall you taste and see that the Lord is good ; then shall you enjoy the pleasures of virtue and piety here, and the gracious rewards of them in the world to come. May God grant these blessings to you all, thro' Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

 S E R M O N VI.

 THE HYPOCRITES PRAYER.

JEREMIAH ii. 26—28.

BUT IN THE TIME OF THEIR TROUBLE THEY WILL SAY, ARISE AND SAVE US. BUT WHERE ARE THY GODS, THAT THOU HAST MADE THEE? LET THEM ARISE, IF THEY CAN SAVE THEE IN THE TIME OF THY TROUBLE.

THE Prophet Jeremiah, notwithstanding the many moving arguments he had used to persuade the Jews to return to God and escape the impending misery, observed that their hearts were fully set on wickedness, and determined to persist in idolatry. But he informs them, in the text, that, however resolute they were in their sins, their confidence would fail, and their conscience upbraid them before God, especially when distress and anguish comes upon them. In this case he tells them they would not betake themselves for safety and happiness to those sinful ways, which they pursued in prosperity.

Here appears the guise of a hypocrite. He serves God only to obtain some favor of him in order to answer his own sinful ends. These Jews did not worship and serve God from a principle of grace, from love to God as perfectly amiable and worthy of religious homage; but that they might have that from God, which present necessity called for.

The prophet predicts terrible calamities and troubles, and the temper and conduct of this people under them. Let us observe the alteration in the frame of their minds. *Now* they were unmoved by the most tender and kind address of the prophet in the name of God. They regarded not his promises nor his threatenings; they set at nought his counsel and reproof. But in the day of their calamity it would be otherwise. *Then* they would say, arise and save us. The thing that produceth this pitiable cry, is trouble. They have no real regard for God. He can have neither honor nor homage from them, while in prosperity.

But in trouble they were not quite so obstinate. They in appearance, acknowledge their dependance on God, and their obligations

to him. Being in distress, they cry, *arise and save us*. We are likely to perish notwithstanding our idols and pleasures, and our utmost exertions. Lord, save us. The prophet, foreseeing these things, tells them what answer they might justly expect from God to such a cry as they would make.—“Arise and save us.”—No, God will answer. “Let your idols and pleasures save you. Where are they, that you loved and served in your prosperity? Call upon them for help. A while ago you would have them for your Gods. If they were worthy your choice and confidence then, they are so now. Abide by your own choice, and be content to receive the issue of your own doings. Why do you come to me *now*? Where are your idols? Call upon them for relief and comfort.”—This is a severe irony, like that, with which Elijah reproved the stupid worshippers of Baal.

One leading doctrine, which I shall take notice of from the words of the text is this. It is the property of hypocrites to seek and cry to God only in a time of affliction, when in prosperity they neglect and despise him.

The children of men are born to trouble. This is a world of sin, and consequently of

sorrow and affliction. Punishment does not always light on those, that most deserve it, in this life. The wicked often prosper, and have all that heart can wish. But their table becomes a snare. The prosperity of the wicked destroys them. And it is the same with adversity. While men continue obstinate in wickedness, they are not savingly profited either by good or bad fortune. In David mercies and comforts awakened grateful sensations, and furnished matter of praise. Afflictions made him more humble, watchful, pious, and holy. But on Saul they had a different effect. Under afflictions Ahab grew worse and worse. But under the influence of God's spirit, adversity changed the heart and life of Manasseh.

Afflictions as well as comforts have a very different effect on different persons. When one remains unprofitable and incorrigible under affliction, it is a sad symptom. But this is the case with many. They grow worse and worse. They pass on and are punished; and yet they continue in sin. Pharaoh was a sad instance of this.

When persons under any distress cry to God for help; but have no real design to serve

him, when delivered from their affliction ;— this is a plain evidence of hypocrisy.

It is fit and proper for all under afflictive dispensations to look to God for help and relief. We are encouraged to do it. God says to us, “call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me.” But, when persons have no regard to God, no desire to break off from their sins ; but only a wish, to obtain present relief,—they surely manifest a character far below that of a christian. As the design of corrections and calamities is to produce repentance, to strengthen pious resolutions, and to promote holiness ; when these effects are wanting in persons afflicted, it is a very clear proof of their unregeneracy.

Hypocrites, who cry to God in trouble, show by their former and their following course, that their prayers were not such as a holy God will accept. In prosperity they despise religion. On some no arguments will prevail to pray in secret. Some will not pray in their families, nor heartily in public. Their present prayer arises from the pains they feel and from fear of greater punishment. They have no design to serve God. Take notice of

them as soon as they are delivered, and you will see them gradually returning to their old sins, or to others as great. Afflictions make them cry and mourn ; prosperity reduces them to the paths of vice and folly.

The second doctrine I shall insist upon is this ;—trouble may alter the mind for a while, tho it does not change the heart.

The Jews, besieged in Jerusalein and under the apprehension of being starved and taken by the enemy, are brought to declare liberty to their bondmen and bondwomen. But as soon as Nebuchadnezzar withdrew his army and they had a prospect of deliverance, their hearts appeared as cruel, and as opposite to the commands of God, as ever ; so that they immediately took away the mock freedom they had given to their slaves, and reduced them to their former bondage.—Nothing, but the powerful energy of the Holy Ghost can effectually change the heart. Without this, you may bray a fool in the mortar of affliction, “yet his folly will not depart from him.”

We are led, in the third place, to observe the miserable state of those, who in their troubles can have no relief, but what their idols afford them.

In our text God seems to refuse the prayer of the sinful people ; refuses to grant them deliverance, and sends them to their idols. How miserable is their case. Now every impenitent sinner hath his idols. Many will deny this, and declare that they own no other God, but the true God. Yet it appears evident, that most men under the gospel *worship idols*. For that is an idol, which men most love and esteem. That, which has the highest seat in a man's heart, is his God. And if any thing be more delighted in and sought after, than the true God, that is an idol. God requires men to love him with all the heart. This men will not do, while in their natural state. Whatever outward worship they perform to God, still it may be said, they have set up idols in their hearts.

Most men make carnal pleasure their idol. They *serve divers lusts and pleasures*. They go to them for comfort and delight, even in their afflictions. They cleave to them with their whole heart, as christians do to their heavenly Father. Some make a God of their belly. Pleasant and luxurious food, and other sensual things give them the highest satisfaction

they have. Nothing is so dear to them as the animating bowl and table richly spread.

Others idolize *honor*. They love the praise of men more than the favor of God. When worldly honor comes in competition with Christ, with his spirit and grace; they forego them all for the sake of their idol.

God's children have remaining principles, which incline them to idolatry. Even those, who censure Solomon for being led away by idols, may find much of the same evil in themselves.

Obstinate sinners may, if they will see that they make idols of some earthly good. Pleasure, profit, and honor, are what the men of the world adore. With thro'ts and cares concerning these they lie down and rise up. These are what they think on first in the morning and last at night.—When they attend any duty without profit, they endure it without the least uneasiness. But when disappointed concerning any worldly good, then they are grieved and vexed. They eagerly cleave to this; but have no regard to the pleasures and duties of religion. For the sake of their idols they can deny themselves many things; but nothing

for the sake of God's glory and the peace and safety of their own souls.

When people resolutely cleave to their idols ; when they will not part with their sins ; when they regard iniquity in their hearts ; then God will not hear them, and they must expect no relief, but from their idols. Persons of this description are very miserable. They are happy, who have Jehovah for their God ; who have in him a present help in time of trouble. But, oh, how wretched are they, who, in times of distress and anguish have no friend, to whom they can go for help.—Their pleasures are but short. In a little while their vanity will strikingly appear. And when these are gone, they have nothing left. They are reduced to Micha's mournful condition, " ye have taken away my God's and what have I more ?" Their idols are gone ; their sinful delights are fled. God, whom they have neglected and despised, is against them, and will revenge on them the quarrel of his covenant. Whither shall they flee ? Oh, where shall they hide their guilty head ?—Tell him now ; tell him on his *dying bed*, of his mirth and jolity ; how pleasurable he hath lived ; how

much he hath been honored and esteemed ; how large his estate, how vast his incomes. What does all this avail him ? It torments him the more. He sees his pleasures forsaking him. These were his Gods, his highest good. But they are bidding him farewell ; and he is left without a friend, without a God. Those vanities, which he once so eagerly clung to, are violently torn away from him. Never more can they give him the least relief from the horrors of an accusing conscience. He is passing under a dreadful load of guilt into a vast eternity.—No hope to encourage him ; no God to be the refuge and support of his poor sinking soul.—Say, my dear friends, are not they miserable, are they not greatly to be pitied, who have, for the sake of poor earthly pleasures, neglected Christ and the grace of the gospel ? Are not they to be pitied, who have lived in the enjoyment of all, that their sensual hearts could wish ; who pass on easily and merrily a short time, and then, friendless and hopeless, go down to the grave ? Are not they wretched, who cannot rationally expect any favor or help from God, and who content themselves to live in that state ? How far

sovereign grace may display itself on those who abuse or neglect the means of obtaining mercy, it belongs not to us to determine. But this we may safely conclude; that they neither deserve, nor have a right to expect any favor from God; but on the contrary may justly believe that, if they continue thus, all the curses written in God's holy word will overtake and destroy them. It is certain, every sin deserves the curse of God; much more then does a state and course of sin. Those, that continue in sin, can expect nothing, but to be forever pursued with God's wrath and vengeance. Let such consider a little, and they cannot but see their case to be sad and miserable. What good will his worldly enjoyments do him? Will riches profit in the day of wrath? Will they bribe the ministers of justice, or purchase liberty from condemnation? Will it afford him any pleasure to remember that he once had his fill of sensual gratifications? Will it ease his pain to reflect that he satisfied his appetites and lusts by secret pollutions? Will the enchanting bowl, the inflaming spirit of strong liquor, cheer the departing soul, and prepare it to appear before the great tribunal of Christ? Will it bear up the

spirits, to have taken revenge on this and that enemy,—to have cursed this and that man in anger,—to have used the name, titles, ordinances, and word of God in a light and profane manner? Will excuses and extenuations soften the judge? Finally, will that pride and stubbornness, which have made him appear so brave before men,—will they stand him in stead in the last important hour?—Alas, at that solemn period, every consideration will be a sword to wound and pierce the sinner's soul.

In order to avoid future wretchedness and to obtain help from God in times of trouble, you must put away your idols and return to God. It is said in Psalm lxxviii. 21. "God shall wound the head of his enemy, and the hairy scalp of him, that goeth on still in his trespasses." This implies that those enemies of God, who lay down their arms and submit to him, may avoid the threatened stroke. I would lay discouragement before you; but would excite you, agreeably to the design of the text, to abandon your sins, and call on the name of the Lord without delay. Oh prayerless souls, hear and tremble. Fall down before God; in humble supplication pour out your hearts

to your Almighty Redeemer. Accept of Jesus Christ in all his offices. Let him be your King, your Lord, and your Savior. Resolve sincerely to serve God and to cleave to him in all the ways of love and obedience. God is not obliged to us for the homage we pay him. But, if we sincerely choose him for our God and worship him as such, we shall according to his gracious promise, obtain a blessing.—Awake, oh secure sinners, arise and call upon God, lest he rend you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you. The time is at hand, when every soul shall feel the want of a God and know the worth of his favor. How happy will it then be for them, who have put away their sins, who have chosen Christ for their friend, and whose God is the Lord. Let us all acknowledge our guilt and wretchedness, humble ourselves before God, choose him for our portion, place our confidence in him, and patiently wait for his salvation. AMEN.

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