

129\*  
C  
M E S S I A H.

F I F T Y

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES,

ON THE SERIES OF

SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES,

Which form the Subject of the celebrated

ORATORIO OF HANDEL.

PREACHED IN THE YEARS 1784 AND 1785,

In the PARISH CHURCH of ST. MARY WOOLNETH,  
LOMBARD-STREET;

By JOHN NEWTON, RECTOR.

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I N T W O V O L U M E S.

---

V O L. II.

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Ah!

Tantanne rem, tam negligenter, agere! TER.

Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this——!

DEUT. xxxii. 29.

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L O N D O N :

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J. BUCKLAND, PATER-NOSTER-ROW; AND  
J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

M DCC LXXXVI.

M E S S I A H.

H I S

EXALTATION, KINGDOM,

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S E C O N D A D V E N T.

V O L. II.

CARMINA, TUM MELIUS, CUM VENERIT  
IPSE, CANEMUS.

V I R G.

*To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my  
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REV. iii. 21.

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## E R R A T A.

- Page 21. l. 9. for *collection*, r. collation.  
— 22. l. 11. for *those*, r. these.  
— 71. at the bottom, for page 127, r. 107.  
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# S E R M O N XXVI.

THE ASCENSION OF MESSIAH TO GLORY.

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PSALM XXIV. 7—10.

*Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts; he is the King of glory.*

THE institutions of the Levitical law, were a shadow or sketch of good things to come. They exhibited a faint and general outline of the mediation and glory of MESSIAH. They may be compared to the delicate engravings on a seal, the beauty and proportions of which, cannot be plainly  
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discerned without the assistance of a glass. The gospel answers to such a glass. Beheld thro' this medium, the miniature delineations of the law, which to the eye of unassisted unhumbled reason, appear confused and insignificant; display a precision of arrangement in the parts, and an importance of design in the whole, worthy the wisdom of their great Author.

From the similarity of the subject of this psalm and the sixty-eighth, it is, at least, probable, that they were both composed upon the same occasion, the removal of the ark of the Lord, from its last stationary residence, to its fixed abode in Zion. When the king, the priests, the singers, and the harpers, all assisted in the procession, attended by a great concourse of the people. The language of the latter part of the psalm is evidently alternate. And we may conceive, that when the ark approached the tabernacle, the priests and Levites who accompanied it, demanded admittance for it in these words, *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, &c.* and were answered by those who were waiting within to receive it, *Who is the King of glory?* To which question

question the proper reply is made, *The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of glory.*

This, if taken according to the letter of the history, was a grand and solemn transaction. But it was at the same time, a type of an event unspeakably more glorious. They who know that the Scriptures of the Old Testament testify of Christ, that it is he of whom Moses in the Law, David in the Psalms, and all the succeeding prophets did write, will I think, agree in considering this passage as referring to his ascension in the nature in which he suffered, into the true holy place in the heavens, as the representative and high priest of his people; when, after having by his own-self purged our sins, he sat down at the right-hand of the Majesty on high. Then having spoiled principalities and powers, he triumphed over them openly, tho' not in the view of mortal eyes. He lifted up his hands, and blessed his apostles, and while in this attitude he was parted from them \*. He ascended gently and gradually, and they, admiring and adoring, beheld him with fixed attention, till a cloud concealed him from their sight †. The pomp and

\* Luke xxiv. 51.

† Acts i. 9.



triumph of his ascension were displayed in the invisible world. But this description, accommodated to our apprehensions, is given, to assist the faith of his people; that their hearts may be comforted, their meditations enlarged, and that in the exercise of grateful love, they may follow him in their thoughts, ascend with him into the heavenly places, and rejoice in his glory.

We conceive of him, therefore, from this sublime passage, as ascending to his Father and our Father; to his God and our God; accompanied with a train of worshipping angels, who demand admittance for MESSIAH the Saviour and friend of sinners, as the King of glory. The question is asked, who is he that claims this honour? An answer is given, asserting his character, his victories, and the justice of his claims—*The Lord of hosts, the Lord strong in battle, he is the King of glory.*

The principal points which offer to our consideration, are,

I. His title *the Lord of hosts.*

II. His victories, implied in the expression, *The Lord strong and mighty in battle.*

III.

III. His mediatorial title, *the King of glory*.

IV. His authoritative entrance into the holy place.

I. MESSIAH, who humbled himself to the death of the cross, is *the Lord of hosts*. He is so, if the scripture be true; I attempt no other proof. This is a point not referred to the discussion of our fallen reason, but proposed by the authority of God in his word, as the foundation of our faith and hope. He is the husband of the church, and the husband of the church is the Lord of hosts \*. It was the Lord of hosts whom Isaiah saw, seated upon a throne, his train filling the temple †. The vision filled him with astonishment, and he cried out, *Wo is me, I am undone; for mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts*. But the Apostle John assures us, that when Isaiah said these things, he saw *his* glory and spake of *him* ‡. This is the title of God in the Old Testament; or, as some chuse to speak, of the Supreme Being. And it is ascribed to MESSIAH in many places. Therefore if he were not the Lord of hosts, the scripture would be chargeable

\* Isa. liv. 5.      † Ibid. lxi. 3.      ‡ John xii. 41.

with authorizing, yea with enjoining idolatry. But he is *the true God, and eternal life* \* ; and they who give him the honour due to his name, have every thing to hope, and nothing to fear.

II. *He is the Lord, strong and mighty in battle.* It was in his human nature, he engaged in battle with his enemies and ours. But the battle was the Lord's. Therefore, tho' he *trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him* †, his own arm brought him salvation. He is conqueror of sin, satan, and death. We were under the power of these, therefore, for our sakes, he engaged in conflict with their united force. He fought, he bled, he died, but in dying, he conquered. The strength of sin is the law ; this strength he subdued, by obeying the precepts of the law, and sustaining the penalty due to our transgressions. He destroyed death and disarmed it of its sting. He destroyed him that hath the power of death, satan. He shook, he overturned the foundations of his kingdom, broke open his prison-doors, released his prisoners, delivered the prey out of the hand of the mighty,

\* 1 John v. 20.

† Isa. lxiii. 3.

*and*

*and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it* \*, that is, his cross. The Apostle alludes to the manner of a Roman triumph, in which the conqueror was drawn in a chariot of state, attended by his officers and soldiers; the principal prisoners followed in chains, and all the treasures and trophies gained from the vanquished enemy, were displayed to adorn the procession. Thus MESSIAH subdued the strength and policy of the powers of darkness, in the hour of his lowest humiliation, when he hung and expired upon the cross, and triumphed over them, gloriously leading captivity captive, when he ascended on high †. Satan, though still an enemy to his church and cause, is despoiled of his dominion; his power is only permissive, and in his fiercest assaults, he is limited by bounds which he cannot pass; by a chain which he cannot break. And all his attempts are controlled and overruled, to the furtherance of the cause which he would suppress, and to the good of the persons whom he would worry and destroy. They are made acquainted with his devices, furnished with armour sufficient

\* Col. ii. 15.

† Ps. lxxviii. 18.

to repel him; and they fight under encouragement of a sure promise, that the God of peace will shortly and finally bruise satan under their feet. As MESSIAH their king has conquered for them, so they in due time, shall be made more than conquerors, by faith in his blood, and in the word of his testimony.

III. The title of *King of glory*, I understand as peculiarly applicable to him in the character of mediator. The glory of his divine nature is essential to him. But in consequence of his obedience unto death, he obtained in the human nature, *a name that is above every name* \*. He suffered as a man, yea, as a malefactor; there was no appearance of glory, in that form of a servant which he assumed for our sakes. Though without sin, he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, subject to poverty, disgrace, and death; but the same man who was crucified, dead, and buried, received glory and authority at his resurrection, and was highly exalted to the administration of all dominion and government. Perhaps the word glory is not easily defined. We conceive it as expressing brightness and splendour. The glory of Solomon

\* Philip. ii. 9.

was the combined effect of his wisdom, power, and riches; which distinguished him in his character, conduct, and appearance, from other men. The glory of the sun, is his effulgence and influence. The word *glory*, when applied to the blessed God, seems to denote that manifestation of himself, by which his intelligent creatures are capable of knowing him; for in himself, he is infinite, inaccessible, and incomprehensible, and dwelleth in that light which no man, which no creature, can approach unto\*. Of this manifestation there are various degrees. His glory shines in the creation. Not only do the heavens declare it by their immensity †, and furnish us with an idea of his unspeakable greatness, who has sent forth ten thousand worlds to tell us, that he resides above them all; but the smallest of his works, the grass and flowers of the field, and the insects which creep upon the ground ‡, bear an impression of his wisdom and goodness, an inimitable criterion of his wonder-working hand, which so far displays his glory. To an attentive and discerning mind, his glory shines in his providence; in his preserving the world which

\* 1 Tim. vi. 16. † Ps. xix. 1. ‡ Ps. civ. 24, 25.

he has made ; in supplying the various wants of his creatures, and particularly in his moral government of mankind. Here, besides his wisdom, power, and general goodness, we discover some traces of his character as the righteous judge of the earth. But to our limited capacities and views, this glory is obscured by many difficulties. Though *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne, yet clouds and darknesses are round about him* \*. By his holy word, his revealed will, we are favoured with a still brighter display of his glory, in the perfections of holiness, justice, truth, and mercy, which fallen man is unable clearly to discover in his works of creation and providence. But chiefly his Son is *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person* †. No one hath seen God at any time, but the only-begotten Son *who is in the bosom of the Father* ‡, intimately acquainted with his counsels, *he hath declared him*. This was the great design of his advent, to make God known to man : for as it is life eternal to know the only true God, so he is only to be known in and by Jesus Christ, whom he

\* Ps. xcvi. 2.

† Heb. i. 3.

‡ John i. 18.

hath

hath sent \*, and who is the way and the door, and there is no entrance to the knowledge of God but by him. In the person and work of MESSIAH, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, the brightness and harmony of all his attributes, is transcendently revealed. In this sense, he is the Lord, the King of glory. When we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to conceive of him according to the testimony given of him in the scripture, we see the glory of God. Other discoveries of it are but scattered rays and emanations of light; but, in Jesus, the glory of God resides in its source and fulness, as light in the sun. He is therefore the King of glory.

IV. As the acknowledged King of glory, in the nature of man, he ascended; the everlasting gates unfolded wide, and he entered into the holy place, not made with hands, there to appear in the presence of God for his people.

1. As their representative. The glory is properly his own, the benefit redounds to his people. Sin had excluded them from the kingdom, but he claimed and took pos-

\* John xvii. 3.

session,



he has made ; in supplying the various wants of his creatures, and particularly in his moral government of mankind. Here, besides his wisdom, power, and general goodness, we discover some traces of his character as the righteous judge of the earth. But to our limited capacities and views, this glory is obscured by many difficulties. Though *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne, yet clouds and darkness are round about him* \*. By his holy word, his revealed will, we are favoured with a still brighter display of his glory, in the perfections of holiness, justice, truth, and mercy, which fallen man is unable clearly to discover in his works of creation and providence. But chiefly his Son is *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person* †. No one hath seen God at any time, but the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father ‡, intimately acquainted with his counsels, *he hath declared him*. This was the great design of his advent, to make God known to man : for as it is life eternal to know the only true God, so he is only to be known in and by Jesus Christ, whom he

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1. As their representative. The glory is properly his own, the benefit redounds to his people. Sin had excluded them from the kingdom, but he claimed and took pos-

\* John xvii. 3.

session,

session, in their name \*. Hence he is styled their forerunner, because by virtue of their relation to him, and their interest in him, they shall surely follow him. This is the encouragement of believers. He is the head of his body the church; and though the church, while in this world, is in a suffering perilous state, yet as the body of a man is not in danger of drowning, while his head is out of the water, so our forerunner and head being in heaven on their behalf, he will assuredly draw all his living members to himself. He has said, *Because I live ye shall live also* †. And he has stipulated for them, that they shall, each in his appointed time, be with him, where he is to behold his glory ‡.

2. As their high priest and intercessor. He presents their persons and their prayers acceptable to God. He bears the iniquity of their holy things. With this encouragement, weak and unworthy as they are in themselves, and though their best services are polluted, they find a liberty of access; and because he ever liveth, thus to make intercession for all who come unto God by

\* Heb. vi. 20. † John xiv. 19. ‡ Ibid xvii. 24.

him,

him \*, they know that he is able to save them to the uttermost.

3. Though the heavens must receive and contain the holy human nature, till the restitution of all things, he is not unmindful of them in their present circumstances. He is seated upon the throne of universal dominion, and he exercises his authority and rule, with an especial view to their welfare. While he pleads for them on high, by the power of his Spirit, he is present with them below. He comforts their hearts, enlivens their assemblies, and manages their concerns. He is their shepherd, who gives them food, controuls their enemies, revives their fainting spirits, and restores their wanderings †. His ear is open to their prayers, his eye is upon them in every situation, and his arm stretched forth for their relief. Therefore, though persecuted, they are not forsaken; though cast down, they are not destroyed. And he has promised that he will not leave them, until he has done all that for them, which his word has taught them to hope for; until he has made them victorious over all their enemies, and put the conqueror's song in

\* Heb. vii. 25.

† Ps. xxiii.

their

their mouths, and a crown of life upon their heads.

This High and Holy One, this King of glory, who is seated on the throne of heaven, dwelleth also in the humble and lowly spirit. He thus solemnly claims the throne of the heart, of each of his people, which in a state of nature is usurped by self and satan ; and he is thus willingly acknowledged and admitted, in the day of his power. *Behold ! He stands at the door and knocks* \* ; and because he is as yet unknown, he is for a while rejected. The bolts and bars of prejudice and unbelief withstand his entrance. But when he comes on a purpose of grace, he will take no denial. For a season he waits to be gracious. But he has an appointed hour, when he reveals his great name, and makes the soul sensible who he is ! Then the gates of brass and bars of iron are broken before him. His greatness and his goodness, what he is in himself, and what he has done and suffered for sinners, are motives which cannot be resisted when they are truly understood. Satan, who as the strong one armed, long laboured to hinder him from his

\* Rev. iii. 20.

rightful possession, is himself dispossessed. The soul laments its former obstinacy, throws down its arms, throws wide open its doors, and bids the King of glory welcome. Then old things pass away, and all things become new. Such was the change the poor man experienced, out of whom Jesus cast a legion of evil spirits. At first, if he could, he would have prevented his kind purpose; he was afraid of his deliverer and said, *I beseech thee torment me not* \*. How wretched was his state then, miserable in himself, and a terror to others! But what a wonderful and happy alteration, when he sat quietly at his Saviour's feet, clothed and in his right mind!

I close the subject with the Apostle's inference, *Seeing then that we have so great a high priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession* †. Let not those who know him be ashamed of their attachment to him. You will not repent in a dying hour, that you once thought too highly of him, or expected too much from him, or devoted yourself with too much earnestness to his service. Nor yield to unbelief and fear. Though your enemies

\* Mark v. 7.

† Heb. iv. 14.

are many and mighty, and your trials great, greater is he that is with you. If the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Lord strong and mighty in battle be for you, who can be against you, so as effectually to harm you? Continue instant in prayer, persevere in well doing. Our ascended Lord will one day return; and then they who have lived, and served, and trusted him here, *shall appear with him in glory* \*.

Others, if they can, must prepare to meet him. But alas! How shall they stand before him? Or whither shall they flee, from him whose presence filleth the heavens and the earth †. Have they an arm like God? Or can they thunder with a voice like his? As yet he is proclaimed by the Gospel, a Saviour, seated upon a throne of grace, stretching forth the golden sceptre of his love, and inviting sinners to be reconciled. Now is the accepted time. Hereafter he will be seen upon a throne of judgment, to take vengeance of his enemies.

\* Col. iii. 4.

† Jer. xxiii. 24.

# S E R M O N XXVII.

MESSIAH THE SON OF GOD.

---

HEB. i. 5.

*For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?*

**T**HOUGH every part of a revelation from God must of course be equally true; there may be a considerable difference even among truths proposed by the same authority, with respect to their immediate importance. There are fundamental truths, the knowledge of which are essentially necessary to our peace and holiness: and there are others of a secondary nature, which, though very useful in their proper connexion, and though the right apprehension of them is



greatly conducive to the comfort and establishment of a believer ; are not so necessary, but that he may be a true believer before he clearly understands them. Thus our Lord pronounced Peter, Blessed \*, for his acknowledgment of a truth, which had been revealed to him, not by flesh and blood, but from above, tho' he was at that time very deficient in doctrinal knowledge. It is not easy to draw the line here, and precisely to distinguish between fundamental and secondary truths ; yet some attention to this distinction is expedient ; and the want of such attention, has greatly contributed to foment and embitter controversies in the church of Christ ; while fallible men, from a mistaken zeal for the faith once delivered to the saints, have laboured to enforce *all* their religious sentiments, with an equal and indiscriminate vehemence. It is evident that the truths essential to the very being of a christian, must be known, and experienced by all, of every nation, people and language, who are taught of God †. For they, and they only, are Christians indeed, who are thus taught. And therefore it seems to follow, that no doc-

\* Matt. xvi. 17.

† Isa. liv. 13.

trine,

trine, however true in itself, which humble and spiritual persons, who study the scripture with prayer, and really depend upon divine teaching, are not agreed in, can be strictly fundamental. And perhaps the chief part of the apparent diversity of their sentiments, does not so often respect the truth itself, as the different acceptation they put upon the words and phrases, by which they endeavour to express their meaning to each other.

However, if there be any doctrine fundamental and necessary to be rightly understood, what the scripture teaches concerning the person of MESSIAH the Redeemer, must be eminently so. Mistakes upon this point, must necessarily be dangerous. It cannot be a question of mere speculation, whether the Saviour be God, or creature. He must be either the one or the other. And the whole frame of our religion is unavoidably dependant upon the judgment we form of him. If he be a man only, or if he be an angel, tho' of the highest order, and possessed of excellencies peculiar to himself; still upon the supposition that he is but a creature, he must be infinitely inferior to his Maker, in com-

parison of whose immensity, the difference between an angel and a worm, is annihilated. Then, all they who pay divine worship to Jesus, who love him above all, trust him with all their concerns for time and eternity, and address him in the language of Thomas, *My Lord, and my God*\*, are involved in the gross and heinous crime of idolatry; by ascribing to him that glory, which the great God has declared, *he will not give to another* †. On the contrary, if he be God over all blessed for ever, Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, then they who refuse him the honour due unto his name, *worship they know not what* ‡. For there is but one God, and, according to this plan, they who know him not in Christ, know him not at all, but are *without God in the world* §. The judgment we form of the Saviour, demonstrates likewise how far we know ourselves. For it may be fairly presumed, that they who think a creature capable of making atonement for their sins, or of sustaining the office of shepherd and bishop of their souls, have too slight thoughts both of the evil of sin, and of

\* John xv. 28.

† Isa. xlii. 8.

‡ John iv. 22.

§ Ephes. ii. 12.

the weakness and wickedness of the human heart.

We ascribe it therefore to the wisdom and goodness of God, that a doctrine so important, the very pillar and ground of truth, is not asserted once, or in a few places of scripture only. It does not depend upon texts which require a nice skill in criticism, or a collection of ancient manuscripts, to settle their sense; but, like the blood in the animal œconomy, it pervades and enlivens the whole system of revelation. The books of Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets, all testify of *Him*, who was styled the Son of God in so peculiar a sense, that the apostle, in this passage, considers it as a sufficient proof, that he is by nature superior to all creatures. The form of the question, implies the strongest assertion of this superiority. As if he had said, Conceive of the highest and most exalted of the angels, it would be absurd to suppose that God would say to him, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

The verse contains three terms which require explanation, *My Son—Begotten—This day.* But who is sufficient for these things? If I attempt to explain them, I wish to speak

with a caution and modesty becoming the sense I ought to have of my own weakness, and to keep upon safe ground; lest instead of elucidating so sublime a subject, I should darken counsel by words without knowledge. And I know of no safe ground to go upon in these enquiries, but the sure testimony of scripture. It would be to the last degree improper to indulge flights of imagination, or a spirit of curiosity or conjecture upon this occasion. Those are the deep things of God, in which if we have not the guidance of his word and Spirit, we shall certainly bewilder ourselves. Nor would I speak in a positive dogmatizing strain; at the same time I trust the scripture will afford light sufficient, to preserve us from a cold and comfortless uncertainty.

The gracious design of God in affording us his holy scripture, is to *make us wise unto salvation* \*. His manner of teaching is therefore accommodated to our circumstances. He instructs us in heavenly things by earthly. And to engage our confidence, to excite our gratitude, to animate us to our duty by the most affecting motives; and that the reve-

\* 2 Tim. iii. 15.

rence we owe to his great and glorious Majesty, as our Creator and Legislator, may be combined with love and cheerful dependence, he is pleased to reveal himself by those names which express the nearest relation and endearment amongst ourselves. Thus he condescends to style himself the Father, the Husband, and the Friend of his people. But though in this way, we are assisted in forming our conceptions of his love, compassion, and faithfulness; it is obvious that these names, when applied to him, must be understood in a sense agreeable to the perfections of his nature, and in many respects different from the meaning they bear amongst men. And thus when we are informed that God has a Son, an only Son, an only begotten Son, it is our part to receive his testimony, to admire and adore; and for an explanation adapted to our profit and comfort, we are to consult, not our own pre-conceived ideas, but the further declarations of his word, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, attending with the simplicity of children to his instructions; and avoiding, as much as possible, those vain reasonings, upon points above our comprehension, which, though flattering to the pride

of our hearts, are sure to indispose us for the reception of divine truth. A distinction in the divine nature, inconceivable by us, but plainly revealed in terms, must be admitted, upon the testimony and authority of him, who alone can instruct us in what we are concerned to know of his adorable essence. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one\**. To each of these three, the perfections of Deity are attributed and ascribed in various parts of scripture. Each of them therefore is God; and yet we are sure, both from scripture and reason, there is, there can be but one God. Thus far we can go safely; and that we can go no farther, that our thoughts are lost and overwhelmed, if we attempt to represent to ourselves, how, or in what manner three are one, and one are three, may be easily accounted for, if any just reason can be given, why a worm cannot comprehend infinity. Let us first, if we can, account for the nature, essence, and properties of the things with which, as to their effects, we are familiarly acquainted. Let us explain the

\* 1 John v. 7.

growth of a blade of grass, or the virtues of the load-stone. Till we are able to do this, it becomes us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust. Far from attempting to explain the doctrine of the Trinity to my hearers, I rather wish to leave an impression upon your minds, that it is to us (and perhaps to the highest created intelligences) incomprehensible. But if it be contained in the scripture (which I must leave to your own consciences to determine in the sight of God) it is thereby sufficiently proved, and humble faith requires no other proof.

Allow me to confirm my own sentiments, by an observation of a celebrated French writer \* to the following purport:—“ The  
 “ whole difference, with respect to this sub-  
 “ ject, between the common people and the  
 “ learned doctors is—that while they are  
 “ both equally ignorant, the ignorance of  
 “ the people is modest and ingenuous, and  
 “ they do not blush for being unable to see  
 “ what God has thought fit to conceal.  
 “ Whereas the ignorance of their teachers  
 “ is proud and affected; they have recourse

\* Abbadie.



“ to scholastic distinctions, and abstract reasonings, that they may not be thought upon a level with the vulgar.”

The form of baptism prescribed by our Lord, for the use of his church, is thus expressed, *Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* \*. It is evident, by comparing this sentence with that which I before recited from the Epistle of John, that the WORD and the SON are synonymous terms, expressive of the same character. They are both the titles of MESSIAH; of him John spoke, when he said, *The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.* And of him God the Father said, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* Had God spoken thus to an angel, it would have been in effect saying, Thou art the Word, which in the beginning was with God, and was God, by whom all things were made. But to which of all the angels would the great God use language like this?

Our Lord, in his conference with Nicodemus, was pleased to say, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, &c.* † It was undoubtedly his design, by this ex-

\* Matt. xxviii. 19.

† John iii. 16.

pression,

pression, to give to Nicodemus and to us, the highest idea possible of the love of God to sinners. He so loved the world, beyond description or comparison, that he gave his only begotten Son.—Surely then the gift spoken of must not be limited to signify the human nature only. This was not all that he gave. The human nature was the medium of the acts and sufferings of MESSIAH; but he who assumed it was the Word, who was before all, and by whom all things were made. It is true the human nature was *given*, supernaturally formed by divine power, and born of a virgin. But he who was in the beginning God with God, was given to appear, obey, and suffer, in the nature of man, for us and for our salvation. And to him are ascribed the perfections and attributes of Deity; of which the highest angels are no more capable, than the worms which creep upon the earth.

I cannot, therefore, suppose, that the title of Son of God, is merely a title of office, or belonging only to the nature which he assumed. But that MESSIAH is the Son of God, as he is God and man in one person. If the forming a perfect and spotless man,  
like

like Adam when he was first created, could have effected our salvation, it would have been a great and undeserved mercy to have vouchsafed the gift; but I think it would not have required such very strong language as the scripture uses, in describing the gift of the Son of God. The God-man, the whole person of Christ, was sent, came forth from the Father. The manhood was the offering, but the Word of God, possessed of the perfections of Deity, was the altar necessary to sanctify the gift, and to give a value and efficacy to the atonement.

The term *begotten*, expresses with us the ground of relation between Father and Son, and upon which an only son is the heir of a father. I feel and confess myself at a loss here. I might take up your time, and perhaps conceal my own ignorance, by borrowing from the writings of wiser and better men than myself, a detail of what have been generally reputed the more prevailing orthodox sentiments on this subject. But I dare not go beyond my own ideas. I shall not, therefore, attempt to explain the phrase *eternal generation*, because I must acknowledge that I do not clearly understand it myself.

Long

Long before time began, the purpose of constituting the Mediator between God and sinners; was established in the divine counsels. With reference to this, he himself speaks; in the character of the Wisdom of God. *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning; or ever the earth was. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were among the sons of men* \*. If the Word of God had not engaged according to an everlasting and sure covenant, to assume our nature, and to accomplish our salvation, before the earth was formed; he would not have appeared afterwards; for we cannot with reason conceive of any new determinations arising in the mind of the infinite God; to whom; what we call the past and the future; are equally present. In this sense, (if the expression be proper to convey such a sense) I can conceive that he was the begotten Son of God from eternity. That is, set up and appointed from eternity for the office, nature, and

\* Prov. viii. 22, 31.

work, by which, in the fulness of time, he was manifested to men. But if the terms, *begotten*, or *eternal generation*, be used to denote the manner of his eternal existence in Deity, I must be silent. I believe him to be the eternal Son ; I believe him to be the eternal God. And I wish not to exercise my thoughts and enquiries more than is needful, in things which are too high for me.

The scripture, in different places, evidently applies the purport of this phrase—*I have begotten thee*, to transactions which took place in time. *This day*, and particularly to two principal events.

1. His incarnation. Thus the angel to Mary, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee* \* ; therefore also the holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God. So the Apostle, *In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son made of a woman* †. And in the passage we are next to consider, *When he bringeth his first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him*.

\* Luke i. 35.

† Gal. iv. 4.

2. His resurrection. To this purpose our text is quoted from the second psalm. *The promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same to the children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again* \* ; as it is also written in the second psalm, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* And in another place he teaches us, that *he who was of the seed of David, according to the flesh, was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead* †.

After all, I would remind you, that the best knowledge of the doctrine of the person of Christ, that which affords life and comfort to the soul, is to be obtained, not so much by enquiry and study on our part, as by a gracious manifestation on his part. Prayer, attention to the great Teacher, a humble perusal of the scripture, and a course of simple obedience to his known will, are the methods which he has prescribed for our growth in grace, and in the knowledge of himself. Thus even babes are made wise ; while they who are wise and prudent in their own sight, the more they endeavour to

\* Acts xiii. 32, 33.

† Rom. i. 4.

investigate and ascertain the sense of scripture, are frequently involved more and more in perplexity. He has given a promise and direction, for the encouragement of those who sincerely seek him. *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him* \*.

This is he with whom we have to do. In and by this Son of his love, we have access by faith unto God. Unworthy and helpless in ourselves, from hence we derive our plea; here we find a refuge; and on this we rest; and build our hope, *that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; who is so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they* †.

\* John xiv. 21.

† Heb. i. 4.

# S E R M O N    X X V I I I .

MESSIAH WORSHIPPED BY ANGELS.

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HEB. i. 6.

*Let all the angels of God worship him.*

**M**ANY of the Lord's true servants, have been in a situation so nearly similar to that of Elijah \*, that like him they have been tempted to think, they were left to serve him alone. But God had then a faithful people, and he has so in every age. The preaching of the gospel may be compared to a standard erected, to which they repair, and thereby become known to each other, and more exposed to the notice and observation of the world. But we hope there are always many, who are enlightened by his word and

\* 1 Kings xix. 10.



holy Spirit, and training up in the life of faith and holiness, known and dear to God, tho' they have little advantage from public ordinances, and perhaps no opportunity of conversing with those who are like-minded with themselves. But even though the number of those who visibly profess the gospel of the grace of God were much smaller than it is, we need not be disheartened. If our fight could pierce into the invisible world, we should be satisfied that there are more with us than against us\*. And such a power is attributed to faith. It is the evidence of things not seen †, because it receives the testimony of scripture, and rests upon it, as a certainty, and a demonstration; requiring no other proof, either of doctrines or facts, than that they are contained in the sure word of God. True christians therefore are comforted by the assurance they have that their Saviour, the Lord of their hearts, is not so neglected and despised, nor his character so misunderstood and misrepresented in yonder land of light, as in this dark and degenerate world. Though too many here, like Festus, treat it as a matter of great indifference, whether Jesus

\* 2 Kings vi. 16.

† Heb. xi. 1.

be dead or alive\* ; and ask them with a taunt, What is your Beloved more than another beloved? they are not ashamed, for they know whom they have believed ; and if men will not join with them in admiring and praising him, they are sure that they have the concurrence of far superior beings. By faith they behold him seated upon a throne of glory, adored by all holy and happy intelligent creatures, whether angels, principalities, powers or dominions. And when he was upon earth, in a state of humiliation, though despised and rejected of men, he was seen and acknowledged by angels. Their warrant and ours is the same. He is proposed to us, as the object of our supreme love and dependance ; and as *we* are enjoined to kiss the Son and to pay him homage, so when God brought him into the world, he said, *Let all the angels of God worship him.*

Though the bringing MESSIAH, the *first*, or *only begotten* into the world, may, as I have observed already, be applied to his incarnation, or to his resurrection, I apprehend it rather designs the whole of his exhibition in

\* Acts xxv. 19.

the flesh. At his ascension, having finished the work appointed for him to do, he was solemnly invested with authority and glory, and sat down at the right-hand of the Majesty on high. But in his lowest, no less than in his exalted state, the dignity of his divine person is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He was always the proper object of worship. It was agreeable to right, and to the nature of things, and a command worthy of God, that all the angels of God should worship him.

The holy angels that excel in strength \*, always do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. We might be certain therefore, that this highest and most comprehensive command a creature is capable of receiving from his Creator, is fulfilled by them, even if we had no express information of the fact. But we have repeated assurances to this purpose. Thus Isaiah, when he saw his glory and spake of him; *saw the seraphim standing; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, say-*

\* Ps. ciii. 20.

*ing, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory* \*. I see not how the force of the argument arising from this passage, to prove that MESSIAH is the proper object of the most solemn adoration, which creatures can offer to the Most High, can be evaded; unless any were hardy enough to assert, either that the prophet was himself imposed upon, or has imposed upon us, by a false vision; or else, that the apostle John † was mistaken when he applied this representation to Jesus Christ. But the apostle likewise had a vision to the same effect; in which, while his people redeemed from the earth by his blood, cast their crowns at his feet, the angels were also represented as joining in the chorus of their praises, saying with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory, and blessing* ‡. In brief, he is the Lord of angels. The heavenly host waited upon him, and sung his praises at his birth. Angels ministered unto him in the wilderness §. And they are so entirely his servants, that at his

\* Isa. vi.

† John xii. 41.

‡ Rev. v. 12.

§ Luke ii. 13, 14.

command, they are sent forth to minister unto, and to attend upon his believing people. *Are they not all ministering* [λειτουργικα worshipping] *spirits* \*, adoring the divine Majesty, yet *sent forth to minister* [εις διακονιαν to the service] *to the heirs of salvation*. He is likewise the head of angels. Though they are not in the same near relation to him, as the sinners whom he has redeemed with his blood; for he took on him their nature. There was no redemption appointed for the angels who kept not their first habitation. But the confirmation of those who continue in holiness and happiness, is in and through him. *For all things both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, are gathered together in one* [ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι, reduced under one head into one body] *in him* †. And they are therefore styled in contradistinction from the others, The elect angels ‡. He is their life, and strength, and joy, as he is ours, though they cannot sing the whole song of his people. It is appropriate to the saved from amongst men to say, This God shines glorious in our nature, he loved us, and gave himself for us.

\* Heb. i. 14. † Ephes. i. 10. ‡ 1 Tim. v. 21.

Here then, as I have intimated, is a pattern and encouragement for us. The angels, the whole host of heaven, worship him. He is Lord of all. We in this distant world have heard the report of his glory, have felt our need of such a Saviour, and are, in some degree, witnesses and proofs of his ability and willingness to save. He lived, he died, he arose, he reigns for us. Therefore humbly depending upon his promised grace, without which we can do nothing, we are resolved, that whatever others do, we must, we will worship him, with the utmost powers of our souls. It is our determination and our choice, not only to praise and honour him with our lips, but to devote ourselves to his service, to yield ourselves to his disposal, to entrust our all to his care, and to place our whole happiness in his favour. I hope, in speaking thus, I speak the language of many of your hearts.

Some reflections easily offer from this subject, with which I shall close it,

1. They who love him, may rejoice in the thoughts of his glory. They have deeply sympathized with him, when reading the history of his humiliation and passion.

It has not been a light concern to them, that he endured agonies, that he was rejected, reviled, scourged and slain. He who suffered these things was their best friend, their beloved Lord, and he suffered for their sakes. In the glass of his word, and by the light of his holy Spirit, he has been set forth as crucified before their eyes. And they have been crucified with him, and have had fellowship with him in his death. From hence they derive their indignation against sin, and their indifference to the world, which treated him thus. But now he is no more a man of sorrows; his head, which was once crowned with thorns, is now crowned with glory; his face, which was defiled with spittle, shines like the sun; his hands, which were manacled, wield the sceptre of universal government; and, instead of being surrounded by insulting men, he is now encircled by adoring angels. Therefore they rejoice with joy unspeakable, expecting soon to see him as he is, and to be with him for ever, according to the gracious promises he has made them, and the tenor of his prevailing intercession for them.

2. What

2. What an honour does his exaltation and glory, reflect upon his faithful followers? The world that rejected him pays little regard to them. They are slighted, or scorned, or pitied, and, in proportion as they manifest his spirit, experience a degree of the treatment which he met with. They are accounted visionaries or hypocrites. Many of them are great sufferers. And few of them, comparatively, are distinguished among men by abilities, influence or wealth. They are pilgrims and strangers upon earth. Yet this God is their God. He who is worshipped by angels is not ashamed to call them brethren\*. They are nearly related to him who sitteth upon the throne. And he is pleased to account them his portion, and his jewels. It doth not yet appear what they shall be. But the day is coming when their mourning shall be ended, their characters vindicated, and they shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Lord. They shall stand before him with confidence, and not be ashamed when he appears. Then shall the difference between the righteous and the wicked be clearly discerned. In that day the

\* Heb. ii. 11.

righte-



righteous shall say, *Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation* \*. While the others, however once admired or feared by mortals, the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, no less than those of inferior rank, shall tremble, shall wish in vain to conceal themselves, and shall say to the *mountains and rocks fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, for the great day of his wrath is come* †. In that hour, the striking description in the book of Wisdom (which, though apocryphal, is in this passage quite consonant with the declarations of authentic scripture) will assuredly be realized. *Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for. And they repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, This was*

\* Isa. xxv. 9.

† Rev. vi. 15, 16.

*he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools counted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints \* !*

3. We may well admire the condescension of this great King, who humbleth himself even to notice the worship of heaven ; that he should look upon the worship of sinful men with acceptance, and permit such worms as we are to take his holy name upon our polluted lips. If we know ourselves, we must be conscious of such defects and defilement attending our best services, as are sufficient to affect us with shame and humiliation. What wanderings of imagination, what risings of evil thoughts, what unavoidable though unallowed workings of self-complacency, mingle with our prayers and praises, and disturb us in our secret retirements, in the public assembly, and even at the table of the Lord ! I hope we know enough of this, to be sensible that we need forgiveness, not only for our positive transgressions of his will, but for our sincerest, warmest, and most enlarged attempts to render him the glory

\* Wisd. v. 1—5.

due to his name! Yet we are incompetent and partial judges of ourselves; we know but little of the evil of our own hearts, and have but a slight sense of the malignity of that evil which is within our observation. But the Lord searches the heart and the reins, to him all things are *naked*, without covering, *open*\* without concealment. He understandeth our thoughts afar off, and beholdeth us exactly as we are. Our dislike of sin, is proportionable to our attainments in holiness, which are exceedingly short of the standard. But he is infinitely holy, and therefore evil is unspeakably hateful to him.—How vile and abominable therefore must our sins appear in his view! Indeed, if he was strict to mark what is amiss, we could not stand a moment before him. Nor would it be agreeable to his majesty and purity to accept any services or prayers at our hands, if we presumed to offer them in our own name. But now there is an atonement provided, and a way of access to a throne of grace, sprinkled with the blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Now that we have an Advocate, Intercessor, and High Priest, to bear the iniquity of our

\* Heb. iv. 13.

holy things, we are accepted in the Beloved: Now the great and holy God vouchsafes to admit such sinners into communion with himself. He invites us to draw near with boldness; and because of ourselves we know not how to pray as we ought\*, he favours us with the influence of his holy Spirit. It is a great instance of the power of faith, that, remembering what we have been, and feeling what we are, and having some right apprehension of him with whom we have to do, we are enabled to approach him with confidence, and to open our hearts to him, with greater liberty than we can use to our dearest earthly friends. His people know by many infallible proofs, that his presence is with them in their secret retirements, and in their public assemblies, according to his promise. He hears and answers their prayers, he revives their spirits, he renews their strength; he gives them reason to say, that a day in his courts is better than a thousand of the world's days. Such are their expectations, and such, in the exercise of faith, is their experience. They worship him whom the angels worship; and they know, that unworthy and defective as they are, their wor-

\* Rom. viii. 26.

ship is no less acceptable to him, than that of the angels in glory; by virtue of their relation to him, who is Lord both of angels and men.

4. Hence we may infer the necessity of that change of heart, which the scripture expresses by a new birth, a new life, a new creation, and other representations; which denote it can only be effected by divine power. Till we are the subjects of this operation, we are incapable of enjoying or even of seeing the kingdom of God\*. Though to outward appearance the congregation before me seem all to be serious and attentive, as if engaged in the same design; and animated with the same desire and hope; he to whom our hearts are known, doubtless observes a great difference. Some of you, though custom, or a regard to your connexions, bring you hither; yet must be sensible that this is not your chosen ground; and that these are not the subjects which give you pleasure. We preach Christ Jesus and him crucified—Christ Jesus the Lord. The Lord sees, though I cannot, the indisposition of your hearts towards him. You are soon weary and uneasy.

\* John iii. 3.

And

And you wish to throw the blame of your uneasiness upon the preacher. You regard his method, his manner, his expressions, with no friendly intention, in hopes of noticing something that may seem to justify your dislike; and a sermon, not very long in itself, is to you very tedious. We wish well to your souls, we study to find out acceptable words; for though we dare not trifle with or flatter you, we are unwilling to give you just offence. But if you will be faithful to yourselves, you may perceive that it is not so much the length or the manner, as the subject of our sermons that disgusts you. You would, perhaps, hear with more attention and patience, did we speak less of him whom the angels worship. There are assemblies more suited to your taste, and there are public speakers to whom you can probably afford a willing ear, for a much longer time than we detain you. Because there you are at home. You are of the world, and you love the world. The amusements, the business, the converse, and the customs of the world, suit your inclination. But here you are not, if I may so speak, in your proper element: and yet it may be, there are persons in the

same seat with you, who think themselves happy to hear, what you hear with indifference or disgust. If you knew your state as a sinner, your need of a Saviour, and the excellency and glory of the Saviour whom we preach to you, *you* likewise would be pleased; and a preacher of very moderate powers would fix your attention, and gain your esteem, if he preached this gospel. But what ideas do you form of a future state? Surely, you cannot suppose that in the eternal world you will meet with any of the poor expedients you have recourse to now, for filling up your time, which otherwise would hang heavy upon your hands. To attempt a detail of the round of vanities, which constitute a worldly life, would be unsuitable to the dignity of the pulpit. Let it suffice, that death will remove you from them all. If they are now necessary to what you account your happiness, must you not of course be miserable without them? If you believe you shall exist hereafter, do you not desire heaven? But such a heaven as the word of God describes could not afford you happiness, unless your mind be previously changed and disposed to relish it. Neither the employment nor the

com-

company of heaven would be pleasing to you. It is a state, where all the inhabitants unite in admiring and adoring him who died upon the cross. If this subject is displeasing to you here, it would be much more so there. Heaven itself would be a hell to an unhum- bled, an unholy soul. Consider this seri- ously, while there is time to seek his face; and tremble at the thoughts of being cut off by death in your present state, insensible as you are of who he is, and what he has done for sinners. May he enlighten your under- standing, and enable you to see the things pertaining to your true peace, before they are for ever hidden from your eyes!



# S E R M O N    X X I X .

GIFTS RECEIVED FOR THE REBELLIOUS.

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PSALM lxxviii. 18.

*Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive : Thou hast received gifts for men ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.*

**W**HEN Joseph exchanged a prison, for the chief honour and government of Egypt \*, the advantage of his exaltation was felt by those who little deserved it. His brethren hated, and had conspired to kill him. And though he was preserved from death, they were permitted to sell him for a bond-servant. *He* owed his servitude, imprisonment and sufferings to them ; and *they* were

\* Gen. xlv. 4, 5.

afterwards indebted to him for their lives, subsistence, honour and comfort. God in a wonderful manner overruling their evil conduct, for future good to themselves. Thus Jesus was despised, rejected and sold; and *he* was actually slain. But he arose, and ascended. The man of sorrows took possession of the throne of glory, and not for himself only. His honour is the source of happiness to those who were once his enemies, and rebellious against him. For the sake of such he lived and died. For their sakes he lives and reigns. He fought, conquered, and triumphed over *their* enemies. As their representative, he received gifts to bestow upon them. Such gifts as their necessities required, derived from the relation he was pleased to stand in to them, and from the value and dignity of his engagements on their behalf. Such gifts as he alone could communicate, and which alone could restore them to the favour of God, and revive his image in their hearts; so as to make it suitable to his holiness and truth, for the Lord God to return to his polluted temples, and to dwell in them and among them.

I for-

I formerly observed \*, that this Psalm and the twenty-fourth, were probably composed and first published on the memorable occasion, when David, having obtained the victory over his numerous enemies, and settled his kingdom in peace, removed the ark, which till then had no fixed residence, into Zion. The apostle's application of this passage †, authorises us to consider that transaction as typical of our Lord's ascension: Jesus is the true ark. The holy law of God was in his heart; his obedience unto death was fully commensurate to the demands of the law ‡; as the mercy-seat, or propitiation, which covered the ark, was exactly equal to its dimensions. He who had thus obeyed on earth, ascended on high, the everlasting gates unfolded, and he *entered into the holy place not made with hands, there to appear in the presence of God for us* ||. In this state he is highly exalted upon the throne of glory, and administers all power in heaven and in earth. From hence is the honour, safety and happiness of those who believe in him. They have nothing to plead for themselves. But, unworthy as they are,

\* Page 2.

† Eph. iv. 8.

‡ Rom. iii. 25.

|| Heb. ix. 24.

he is not ashamed to own them ; and he assures them, that all he did, and that all he has received, so far as they are capable of sharing in it, is for them. The clauses as they lie in the text, suggest a convenient method for our meditations, and will lead me briefly to consider four points ;

*His ascension—his victories—the gifts he received for men—and the great end for which he bestows them.*

I. *Thou hast ascended on high.* God formed man originally for himself, and gave him an answerable capacity, so that no inferior good can satisfy and fill his mind. Man was likewise, by the constitution and will of his Maker, immortal, provided he persevered in obedience. But sin degraded and ruined him, shut the gates of paradise and the gates of heaven against him. Man destroyed himself ; but wisdom and mercy interposed for his recovery. A promise was given of the seed of the woman, who should break the serpent's head, defeat his policy, destroy his power, and repair the mischiefs he had introduced by sin. MESSIAH fulfilled this promise. And when he had finished all that was appointed for him on earth, as the second

Adam, the head and representative of his people, he ascended on high, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. As an illustrious proof to the universe, that God is reconciled; that there is forgiveness with him for sinners who implore his mercy; one in our nature and on our behalf, has taken possession of the kingdom. The series of texts in this part of the oratorio, recalls this subject frequently to our thoughts, nor can we think of it too often. It is the foundation of our hopes, the source of our sublimest joys, and the sufficient, the only sufficient answer to all the suggestions by which guilt, fear, unbelief and Satan, fight against our peace. Surrounded as we are with enemies and difficulties, we plead against every accusation and threatening, that our Head is in heaven; we have an Advocate with the Father, a High Priest upon the throne, who, because he ever liveth to make intercession, is able to save to the uttermost. This is all our plea, nor do we desire any other. His ascension on high, is a sure pledge that his servants shall follow him \*. And even at present, by faith they ascend and are seated with him in the

\* John xii. 26.

heavenly places \*. They behold invisibles with the eye of their mind; they realize the glorious scene, from which they are separated by the veil of flesh and blood. They know that, even now, day and night, day without night, myriads of golden harps and happy voices, resound his praise. The Babe of Bethlehem, the Man who once hung dead and forsaken upon the cross, is now the Lord of glory. In the thought of his glory they greatly rejoice, because they love him, and because they expect shortly to be with him.

II. *Thou hast led captivity captive.* The expression is emphatical. He has conquered and triumphed over all the powers which held us in captivity, so that captivity itself is taken captive. The spirit and force of it is destroyed, and his people, when released by him, and walking in his ways, have no more to apprehend from those whose captives they were, than a conqueror has to fear from a prisoner in chains. The energy of the phrase, is not unlike that of the apostle, which we are hereafter to consider—*death is swallowed up in victory.* Man by nature is a captive, in a state of confinement and

\* Eph. ii. 6.

bondage,

bondage, from which he cannot escape by any address or effort of his own.

He is a captive to sin; a sinful state is a state of bondage; and this, notwithstanding the sinner is a willing captive, speaks swelling words of vanity, and boasts of liberty, while he is the servant, the slave of corruption. He is not always, and in every sense, a willing captive. Conscience sometimes remonstrates, fills him with fears and forebodings, which make him struggle to be free. And there are many sins, which, besides being offences against the law of God, are directly contrary to the sinner's present interest and welfare; and would be so upon his own plan, and if he was wholly his own master, and had no account to render of his conduct. Persons enslaved to habits of lewdness or drunkenness, need not be told from the pulpit, that the courses they pursue are injurious to their health, their business, or substance, their reputation and their peace. They know it and feel it, without a monitor. There are seasons, when the ill consequences they bring upon themselves, make them sick of the drudgery, and excite some efforts towards a reform. But in vain. The next  
return

return of temptation, bears down all their resolutions like a torrent, and, after every attempt to amend, they usually become worse than before. For none can escape, unless the Son makes them free. His grace can overcome the most obstinate habits of licentiousness, and implant the contrary habits of purity and temperance. But they, who are not delivered by him, must die in their chains.

III. *Thou hast received gifts, even for the rebellious.* To bestow gifts upon the miserable, is *bounty*; but to bestow them upon rebels, is *grace*. The greatness of the gifts contrasted with the characters of those who receive them, displays the exceeding riches of the Redeemer's grace. He came to save, not the *unhappy* only, but the *ungodly*. He gives pardon, peace, and eternal life, to his enemies; whose minds are so entirely alienated from him, that until he makes them willing, in the day of his power, their minds are determined against accepting any favour from him. They live long in contempt of the law and authority of God; and though justly obnoxious to his displeasure, while left to themselves, they despise and reject the proposals  
of



of his mercy. If they sometimes acknowledge themselves to be sinners, they still presume that they are able to procure his favour by their own performances. They strangely imagine they have a sufficient ground of hope, so long as it appears to themselves, that they are not altogether so bad as others. And when, by the Gospel, the Lord treats them as sinners already justly condemned by the tenor of his holy laws, and informs them of the exigency of their case; that nothing less than the resources of his infinite wisdom, and the most expensive exertion of his unspeakable love, can possibly save them from destruction; the pride of their hearts rises against his declarations. His wisdom, in their view, is folly; and his love provokes their enmity and scorn. He says of MESSIAH, *this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him*; but the language of their hearts is, *we will not have him to reign over us* \*. They revile and oppose the messengers of his grace, account them enemies, charge them as troublers of their peace, and as those who turn the world upside down: and when not restrained by the providence of God, inflict upon them,

\* Luke xix. 14.

besides reproaches, stripes, imprisonment, tortures, and death. If their dearest friends, and those who are connected with them by the nearest ties of relation, submit to the testimony of God, and yield themselves to the appointed Saviour, they are treated as apostates from the general opinion. This defection from the common cause, is often sufficient to cancel the strongest obligations, to dissolve the closest intimacy, to raise a person foes in his own household, and to excite envy, hatred, and malice, in those who once professed esteem and love. Can the spirit of rebellion rise higher, than when they who have insulted the authority, defied the power, and resisted the government and will of the great God, proceed at length to trample upon his tenders of reconciliation, and to affront him in that concern, which of all others, is dearest to him, the glory of his grace in the person of his Son? Yet this is no exaggerated representation. Such is the disposition of the heart of man towards God. Such were some of us. And such, I fear, some of us are to this hour. I do not say that this enmity of the carnal mind, acts, in every person who is not subject

subject

subject to the grace of God, with equal rage and violence. In a land of light, liberty, and civilization, like ours; a variety of circumstances may concur, to set bounds to its exercise; education, a natural gentleness of temper, and even interest, may keep it within limits of decorum, especially towards some individuals; but I affirm, or rather the scripture declares, that enmity against God, a disaffection to his gospel, no less than to his law, and a dislike to those who profess and obey the truth, are principles deeply rooted in our nature, as fallen: and however they may seem dormant in some persons, for a season, would operate vigorously, if circumstances were so to alter, as to afford a fair occasion. For, as of old, *he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit* \*, even so it is now. And it is still as true, as in the apostle's days, that *all who will live godly in Christ Jesus †, shall, in one degree or form or other, suffer persecution, from those who will not.*

Thus men are characterized in the word of God. Rebels and enemies, having *a neck*

\* Gal. iv. 29.

† 2 Tim. iii. 12.

*of iron*, to denote their obstinacy; *a brow of brass* \*, to express their insolence and presumption; and *a heart of stone* †, insensible to the softest methods of persuasion; incapable of receiving tender, kind, and generous impressions, though they are wooed and besought by the consideration of the mercies of God, of the dying agonies of MESSIAH; unless that mighty power be displayed in their favour, which brought forth streams of water from the rock in the wilderness.

MESSIAH died, arose, and ascended on high, that he might receive gifts for rebels of this spirit and disposition. The one grand gift I shall specify, is, indeed, comprehensive of every other good. The gift of the Holy Spirit. He said to his sorrowing disciples, *It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you* ‡. Soon after his ascension, this promise was fulfilled. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit §, and the people who had slain the Lord, were pricked to the heart, repented of their sin,

\* Isa. xlviii. 4. † Ezek. xxxvi. 26. ‡ John xvi. 7.  
§ Acts ii. 4, 37.

received faith in him whom they had pierced, and experienced joy and peace in believing.

That the gospel is preached upon earth, by a succession of ministers, called and furnished for that service; and that the gospel, when preached, is not rejected by all, as it is by many, is wholly to be ascribed to the agency of the Holy Spirit, whose office and covenant engagement it is, to convince *the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment* \*, and to glorify MESSIAH. He opens the eyes of the understanding, subdues the stubborn will, softens, or rather removes, the heart of stone, and gives a feeling tender heart, a heart of flesh. Then the rebels relent and sue for mercy. Then they obtain faith, repentance, remission, a full and free salvation, and all the gifts which MESSIAH has received for them.

IV. His ultimate design, in favour of rebellious men, the great final cause of his mediation, and particularly of his bestowing on them the gift of the Holy Spirit, is, *that the Lord God may dwell among them*. Man was created in the image of God, who formed him for himself. But he sinned, and

\* John xvi. 9, 11.

was forsaken. God withdrew his light and love from him, and man sunk into darkness and misery. Sin and Satan took possession of the heart, which was originally designed to be the temple of the living God. But the Lord had a merciful purpose, to return in a way worthy of his perfections. Without him, the souls of men, and the whole human race, as to their proper happiness, are like what the earth would be without the sun, dark, cold, fruitless, and comfortless. But the knowledge of MESSIAH, like the sun, enlightens the world, and the heart.

When in the day of his power, by the revelation of his light and love, he destroys the dominion of sin, and dispossesses Satan, he reclaims his own, and takes possession for himself. The heart, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, and anointed with the holy unction, becomes a consecrated temple of the Holy Ghost. This persuasion, though now by many, who have not renounced the name of Christian, deemed the essence of enthusiasm, was once thought essential to Christianity; so that the apostle speaks of it as an obvious incontrovertible fact, with which no true Christian could be unacquainted.

ed. *Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost \* ?* Again, he speaks of Christ dwelling in the heart †. *Christ in you the hope of glory ‡.* And in another place, *Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them § ;* agreeably to his promise by the prophets. He liveth in them, as the principle of their life, wisdom, and power ; therefore the apostle says, *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ||.* There is a mutual indwelling between the Lord and his people. They in him as the branch in the vine ; and he in them as the sap in the branch. He in them as in his temples ; they in him as in their strong tower of defence. And from hence we infer the duration of their life of grace ; that it shall continue and spring up into everlasting life ; since it is properly not their own, but his ; and since he has said, *Because I live, ye shall live also.*

He dwells likewise among his people in their collective capacity. His whole church, comprizing all the members of his mystical body, *built upon the foundation of the apostles*

\* 2 Cor. vi. 19.

† Eph. iii. 17.

‡ Col. i. 27.

§ 2 Cor. vi. 16.

|| Gal. ii. 20.

*and prophets*, form a building fitly framed together, a palace, a holy temple for the Lord the great King. He dwelleth likewise in every particular society, who walk by his rule, and adorn the profession of his truth, by a conversation becoming the gospel. He is *a wall of fire round about* them, and a *glory in the midst of them* \*. When they meet together in his name, he is there. He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. It is his presence that gives life and efficacy to all his ordinances, and communicates a power to his word, by which the minds of his worshipping people are enlightened, strengthened, healed, and comforted. Here he manifests himself to them, as he does not unto the world; and they can adopt the words of the psalmist, *A day in thy courts, is better than a thousand*. To his presence they owe their peace and increase, their union and protection. And if he withdraws, *Ichabod* may be written upon their solemn assemblies †; for even his own appointments can afford them neither profit nor pleasure, unless they are animated by his glory. Their graces languish, their harmony

\* Zech. ii. 5, 10.

† 1 Sam. iv. 21.



is interrupted, strifes and dissensions take place, evil roots of bitterness spring up to trouble and defile them \*; *men arise from among themselves, speaking perverse things, and fierce wolves break in, not sparing the flock †*, if the good Shepherd suspends his influence and presence.

I trust he dwells and walks in the midst of us. He is here as an observer, and as a gracious benefactor. He sees who *draw near him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him*; and he likewise takes notice of them that fear and love him, and who esteem the light of his countenance to be better than life. *The high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, dwelleth likewise with those that are of a contrite and humble spirit ‡*, to revive and bless them.

\* Heb. xii. 15. † Acts xx. 29, 30. ‡ Isa. lvii. 15.

# S E R M O N    X X X .

THE PUBLICATION OF THE GOSPEL.

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PSALM lxxviii. 11.

*The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it. [Or, of the preachers.]*

**P**ERHAPS no one psalm has given greater exercise to the skill and the patience of commentators and critics, than the sixty-eighth. I suppose the difficulties do not properly belong to the psalm, but arise from our ignorance of various circumstances to which the Psalmist alludes; which probably were, at that time, generally known and understood. The first verse is the same with the stated form of benediction, which was used whenever the ark of the Lord sat

forward while Israel sojourned in the wilderness\* : which confirms the prevailing opinion, that the psalm was primarily designed, as an act of thanksgiving, to accompany the removal of the ark to Zion, by David. The seventh and eighth verses are repeated, with little variation, from the Song of Deborah †. The leading scope of the whole appears to be, first, a recapitulation of God's gracious dealing with Israel, and of the great things he had done for them, from the time he delivered them from their bondage in Egypt ; and then, a transition, in the spirit of prophecy, to the far greater things he would do for his people, under and by the gospel dispensation, in consequence of MESSIAH'S exaltation to receive gifts for rebellious men. This verse, though the particular occasion is not specified, probably refers to some season of deliverance or victory, when the women, according to the custom of the nation, assembled to praise the Lord, with timbrels, songs and dances ‡. The songs and responses of Miriam and her companions, and of the women who welcomed Saul and David after

\* Numb. x. 35. † Judges v. 4, 5. ‡ Exod. xv.

the defeat of the Philistine \*, I have formerly mentioned as instances †. The word, which is rendered, *Those who published or preached*, being expressed with a feminine termination, leads the mind to this sense. But we are not necessarily confined to it; for the word rendered *preacher* in the book of Ecclesiastes, is likewise in the feminine form, though we are sure the person intended by it was Solomon.

However, this passage is properly introduced in *The Messiah*, and in its proper place, immediately after the view given of our Saviour's triumphant ascension, as it leads us to consider the first visible effect of that great event: for soon afterwards, *when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the Lord gave the word ‡*. The holy Spirit, the precious gift, which Jesus had received for rebellious men, descended with visible emblems, and a powerful energy, and inspired and qualified his disciples for the great work of establishing and spreading his spiritual kingdom. From that hour, great was the number of the preachers, and great was the success and efficacy of their mission. So that in a few years

\* 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7. † Page 127, Vol. I. ‡ Acts ii. 1--4.

the gospel spread like the light, from Jerusalem, through all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. And he who said, *Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world* \*, has, by the same Spirit, perpetuated his word, and a succession of preachers, to our time; and has promised to perpetuate and work by the same means, till time shall be no more.

My text therefore, if not a direct prophecy of the publication of the gospel, is at least a fit motto to a discourse on this very important subject. We may consider it in two senses, which, though something different, are equally agreeable to the words before us, and to the general tenor of the scripture.

I. *That the message is the Lord's.* He gave the word, and prescribed to his servants the subject matter of their preaching.

II. *That the messengers employed, are called and sent forth by him.* The Lord gave the word or command; in consequence of which word, the number of preachers was great, as when in the beginning, he said, *Let there be light, and there was light.*

\* Matt. xxviii. 20.

I. The Lord gave the word which the multitude of preachers went forth to publish. His merciful design was great, to deliver finners from bondage, misery and death; and to bless them with liberty, life and peace. But they are by nature rebellious and obstinate, and must be *made* willing. He only can subdue their prejudices, and soften their spirits; and he has promised to display his power in their favour, by a certain mean of his own appointment, and we cannot expect that he will do it in any other way. This mean is the gospel, which, for its admirable suitableness and efficacy, is commended to us as *his wisdom and his power* \*. He has given it for this purpose, and his blessing makes it successful. He has said concerning it, *As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please; it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it* †. It has been confirmed by the experience of

\* 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

† Isa. lv. 10, 11.

ages,

ages, that no mean but his, can produce the desirable effect. It is confirmed, by observation, in the present day. If the wisdom of man, if learning, if oratory, if animated descriptions of the beauty of virtue, and pathetic persuasions to the practice of it could reform, we should be a reformed people. But alas, this is only to oppose a mound of sand to the violence of a flood. Notwithstanding many ingenious sermons and treatises upon this plan, are admired and praised, wickedness prevails and triumphs. They have little influence upon the conduct of civil life; and, I may boldly say, no influence to inspire the heart with the love and peace of God, and to bring it into a habit of subjection to his will and command. Nothing will do this but the gospel, the word which the Lord has given. This alone shews the evil of sin in its true light, affords a solid ground for the hope of mercy, and furnishes those motives which alone are sufficient to break the force of the temptations and difficulties with which we have to conflict. When this word is simply and cordially received, an immediate and wonderful change takes place. The sinner abandons his false

hopes and vain pursuits, is freed from his former slavery to the love of the world and the fear of man, and becomes the willing servant of him who redeemed him with his own blood.

But we are sometimes asked, what we understand by the gospel? The use of the term in a restrained sense, so as to imply there are but few comparatively who preach it, is deemed invidious and assuming; and it is supposed by many that a sermon, if delivered from a pulpit, and if the text be taken from the Bible, must of course be the gospel. It is undeniable, however, that there are a variety of different and opposite sentiments delivered from pulpits; and surely the gospel cannot be opposite, contrary, yea contradictory to itself! It is a mournful consideration, that multitudes of people are not qualified to judge of this point. Not properly for want of ability, for many of them are persons of good sense and discernment, and can judge and talk well upon other subjects; but for want of attention. Their application is engrossed by the demands of business or pleasure, and they have neither leisure nor taste for a careful perusal of the scriptures,  
nor



nor for the examination of religious sentiments. If the language and elocution of the preacher be good, and if there be no close and painful address to the conscience, they are satisfied. The apostle Paul undoubtedly preached the gospel; and he tells us himself that he preached Christ crucified; he preached Christ as appointed of God, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*\*. He preached the cross of Christ †, he gloried in it, and he determined to glory in nothing else. It treats all mankind as already in a state of condemnation; it declares their utter inability to save or help themselves; and it gives assurance of pardon and salvation to all who believe in the Son of God. That they may be encouraged and enabled to believe, it describes the dignity of his person, the necessity and greatness of his sufferings, the completeness of his atonement, the prevalence of his intercession—his love, authority, power and faithfulness. These truths revealed and applied to a guilty conscience, by the power of the holy Spirit, produce faith. The sinner perceives the sufficiency and excellency of such a Saviour, commits

\* 1 Cor. i. 30.

† Gal. vi. 14,

himself

himself to his compassion and care, and renounces every other hope and service. He looks to the Saviour by the eye of his mind, with desire and admiration, and derives life from his death, healing from his wounds, as the Israelites, when wounded, were healed by looking upon the brazen serpent. And not only is the conscience relieved, by this knowledge of Christ crucified—the understanding is likewise enlightened, the judgment is formed, the affections regulated and directed by it. Then old things pass away, all becomes new. The love of sin departs, and the future life is devoted to him, who therefore *died and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living* \*.

There is likewise a certain energy or power which accompanies the gospel when it is truly preached, which sufficiently characterizes and distinguishes it from all other religious schemes and systems. Our Lord during his personal ministry, frequently gave proofs that he knew the heart of man. When Zaccheus thought himself unknown and unseen, he called him by his name †. He reminded Nathanael of what had passed

\* Rom. xiv. 9.

† Luke xix. 5.

in secret under the fig-tree \* ; and by a few words, brought to the remembrance of the woman of Samaria all that she had done in her life †. A similar effect accompanies the preaching of his gospel to this day. The gospel is preached, when they who are present find the secrets of their hearts are made manifest ; when the preacher, who perhaps never saw them before, reminds them of what they have done, or said, or thought, possibly of things transacted long ago, and almost forgotten by themselves ; and likewise describes the very feelings of their hearts while he is speaking to them. It is usually in this way that conviction of sin first takes place ; and in this way, that a convinced burdened sinner meets with seasonable support and direction, so exactly suited to his case, that he almost thinks the preacher is speaking to none but himself. No preachers but those who speak in conformity to the word which the Lord gave, have this power over the heart and conscience.

II. It is owing to the word, the appointment and power of God, that any persons are induced or enabled to preach this gospel.

\* John i. 48.

† John iv. 29.

Men may, indeed, assume the office of a preacher upon other grounds; there are too many who do. But though they speak in the name of the Lord, and as his ministers, if he has not sent them, they cannot declare his message in such a manner as to make full proof of their ministry\*. They may profit themselves, according to their low views, and may obtain such honours and emoluments as the world can give; but they have not the honour which cometh from God only. They are not wise to win souls †. They have no testimony in the consciences of their hearers. They may deliver truths occasionally, which are valuable and useful in their proper places, but for want of knowing how to connect them with what the apostle styles, *The truth as it is in Jesus* ‡, they are unable either to break the hard heart, or to heal the wounded spirit. The thoughtless are not alarmed, nor the ignorant instructed. The wicked go on in their evil ways—

*The hungry sheep look up, but are not fed.*

Nay we see, in fact, though a few persons may still be found, who place their religion

\* 2 Tim. iv. 5. † Prov. xi. 30. ‡ Eph. iv. 21.

in a dull, unmeaning attendance upon the form of public worship, upon any form in which it was their lot to be educated ; yet, in many places, the bulk of the people, by their contempt of the Lord's-day, and by their customary manner of absenting themselves from their appointed teachers, give sufficient proof that they have neither found, nor expect to find, so much benefit or pleasure, as to make them think it worth their while to attend them.

It will appear to competent judges, that faithful preachers are called and prepared for their office by the Lord, the head of the church, and not by human institutions, from the following considerations.

1. That the gospel cannot be rightly understood but by divine teaching. The natural man, however distinguished by abilities or literature, cannot *receive the things of the Spirit of God* \*; nay, he cannot discern them. He may, indeed, know something of the gospel system, considered as a matter of science ; he may know how to defend the outworks of christianity, and be master of the external evidences for its truth ;

\* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

and

and he may espouse orthodox opinions; and be a successful champion in the field of controversy. But the inward power and life, that which constitutes the essential difference of true religion, is no less remote from his apprehension, than the idea of light is from a person born blind. This he can only learn by experience. The first lesson received and learnt by those who are taught of God, is a conviction of guilt, ignorance and misery—and then they begin to learn the importance, necessity, and design of the gospel. The man who is thus instructed, if the Lord be pleased to call him to the office of teaching others, will in due time proceed to deliver to the people, what he has himself learnt; not with hesitation, uncertainty or indifference, not what he has acquired by hearsay or from books, *but he has the witness in himself* \*. His heart teacheth his mouth †. He believes, therefore he speaks. He simply and freely declares that which he himself has known and seen, and tasted of the word of life. And speaking from the fulness of his heart, with an earnestness inspired by the great-

\* 1 John v. 10.

† Prov. xvi. 23.

ness and importance of his subject, he speaks to the heart and feelings of his hearers, and impresses a manifestation of the truth upon their minds.

2. That the desire of preaching this gospel when known, if it be a right desire, must likewise be given. If a man should attempt the service, without counting the cost, or considering the consequences, he will most probably be disgusted and wearied. And if he seriously and properly considers beforehand what he is about to engage in, and has a due sense of his own weakness, he will tremble at the prospect, and direct his thoughts to some other employment, unless his call and support be from on high. What courage, wisdom, meekness and zeal, appear requisite, in the view of such an enquirer, to qualify a man, for preaching and continuing to preach, a doctrine so unpleasing to the world, as the doctrine of the cross has in all ages proved! What opposition, and snares and difficulties, *what fightings from without, what fears within*, may be expected! Surely, he will be ready to shrink back, and to say, *Who is sufficient for these things?* But the Lord, by the con-  
straining

straining sense of his love, and by giving a deep impression of the worth of souls, and by exciting in the mind a dependance upon his all-sufficiency, can and does encourage those, whom he calls and chuses, to serve him in the gospel. In themselves they are quite unequal to what is before them, but they obey his voice; they trust in his promises for guidance and protection, and are not disappointed. We are therefore directed to pray, that *the Lord of the harvest would send*, or rather (according to the force of the Greek word) *thrust forth labourers into his harvest*\*.

3. That only he who sends forth his ministers can enable them to persevere. It is a service of continual exertion and expence, and requires a continual supply. The opposition of the world, and the power of temptation, acting upon the weakness and depravity of the heart, would quickly prevail against the best ministers, if they were left to carry on the warfare at their own charges. They are at times, yea frequently, in situations and circumstances, which teach them feelingly the meaning of the apostle's words,

\* Matt. ix. 38.



*We were pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that we despaired even of life* \*. Besides the trials incidental to the christian profession, which they are exposed to in common with others, they have many which are peculiar to their calling as preachers of the gospel. Their chief pre-eminence over christians in private life, is a painful one; they have the honour of bearing a double share of the heat and burden of the day, and of standing in the foremost ranks of the battle, to provoke and receive the fiercest assaults of the enemy. Their only resource and hope, is in the faithfulness and compassion of their Lord, under whose banner and eye they fight, and who has said, *Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world.*

4. That the Lord only can give success to their endeavours. *Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but there is no increase unless he affords a blessing* †. It is at least a presumptive proof, that he has called a man to preach, if he owns his labours, since he has not promised to own any but those whom he sends.

We must however allow, and observe, that to preach salvation to others, and even to be

\* 2 Cor. i. 8.

† 1 Cor. iii. 6.

instrumental in saving souls, will not absolutely prove, that the preacher is in a state of salvation himself: we hope it is generally so; but there are exceptions and instances, which should awaken our circumspection, and keep us constantly looking to the Lord in a spirit of humility and dependance. There was a Judas among the apostles; and we are assured that at the last day, some, yea many, will plead having done great things in the name of Christ, whom he will notwithstanding disown as workers of iniquity\*. Even the apostle Paul was impressed by this thought, and he has recorded the improvement he made of it for our instruction. *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away †.*

\* Matt. vii. 22, 23.

† 1 Cor. ix. 27.

# S E R M O N   X X X I .

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE, GLAD TIDINGS.

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ROM. x. 15.

*[As it is written] How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.*

**T**HE account which the apostle Paul gives of his first reception among the Galatians \*, exemplifies the truth of this passage. He found them in a state of ignorance and misery ; alienated from God, and enslaved to the blind and comfortless superstitions of idolatry. His preaching, accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit, had a great and marvellous effect. His principal subject was the death of Jesus, who

\* Gal. iv. 15.

had lately suffered as a malefactor at Jerusalem. Though the transaction was past, and the scene at a considerable distance, yet by the manner of his representation, the fact was realized to their minds; and they could have been no more affected, had they been actually upon the spot, at the time. Jesus Christ was exhibited to them, as crucified before their eyes\*. By the same divine energy they were instructed in the knowledge of his character, who he was, and why he suffered; and likewise understood their own need of such a Saviour. Thus they hearkened to him, not with the indifference of the Athenians, but with application of all that he said to themselves. They heard, they believed, and they rejoiced. The apostle reminds them, that they had not received a cold speculative doctrine, but such a one as imparted a blessedness to them. This, indeed, many of them afterwards lost, when they were unhappily seduced by false teachers. But for a time the knowledge of a Saviour, so exactly suited to their circumstances, made them happy. And while they were so, they felt very strong emotions of gratitude and

\* Gal. iii. 1.

esteem

esteem for the messenger who brought them these glad tidings. Though he was by many accounted and treated as the off-scouring and filth of all things, the Galatians received him as an angel of God, and attended to him, as if the Lord, who sent him, had spoken to them in person. And although he had, till then, been an entire stranger to them, his message opened a way to their hearts, and they gave him every testimony of the most cordial friendship; insomuch *that had it been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to him.*

Thus, likewise, when Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, the consequence was, great joy in that city \*. But when the gospel is thus gladly received, there must be a suitable disposition of mind. It is sent *to the poor.* It is designed to *heal the broken-hearted, to deliver the captives, and to give sight to the blind †.* And therefore they who are well satisfied with themselves, who say, *We see,* and who boast of their freedom, cannot possibly judge either of the truth, or of the importance of the gospel doctrine. As the

\* Acts viii. 8.

† Luke iv. 18.

Lord waters the earth with a profusion worthy of his magnificence and bounty, and does not confine his rain to cultivated soils, for the good seed of his word often *falls upon the highway, upon the rocks, and among thorns* \*; but is only productive upon the good ground of an *honest and good heart*. Not that any human heart is truly good by nature, but some are prepared for the reception of the truth. And this preparation is the first effect of the word, when it brings forth fruit unto life eternal. It undeceives those who were for a time deluded with vain hopes, and convinces them that they are poor, and blind, and wretched and helpless. Then they gladly accept the gospel of peace, and the message is to them as life from the dead.

The passage in the prophet Isaiah, from which my text is quoted, is very animated and descriptive. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings* †? Imagine a distressed people, at the will and disposal of a conqueror, who was justly offended with them, and under an anxious trembling uncertainty how he would treat them. If an authorized messenger

\* Luke viii. 13—15.

† Isa. lii. 7.

should

should inform them, that, instead of the punishment they deserved, the king vouchsafed them a free pardon, was ready to receive them with favour, and to bestow honours and possessions upon all who applied to him, without excepting the most guilty, even the ringleaders in rebellion: how welcome would this messenger be to them! This, indeed, is beyond the manner of men. No earthly monarch has either magnanimity to make, or power to make good, so gracious and unlimited a proclamation to a whole nation of rebels. But this is the manner of the great God. Such an act of grace is the gospel. An act of grace to sinners, yet founded in righteousness, and displaying the glory of his justice equally with the riches of mercy. For it is founded on the mediation of the Son of his love, and procured by his blood. The messengers of this grace are thus welcomed and honoured by those who believe their report: *and are esteemed very highly in love for their works sake* \*. We may observe,

I. The message of the gospel is *glad tidings of peace and good things*.

\* 1 Thess. v. 13.

II. The

II. The messengers, or preachers, find ample reward in their *success* and *acceptance*.

I. According to the Hebrew idiom, (which frequently obtains in the New Testament) all good things are comprized in the term *peace*. They are eminently comprized in the peace of the gospel, *for it is the peace of God which passeth understanding*. It brings a blessed assurance, that MESSIAH has made peace by the blood of his cross. They who believe this good report, derive from it peace of conscience; and are enabled to say, *Tho' thou wert justly angry, thine anger is turned away* \*. It dispels their fears and forebodings, and inspires them with liberty to come to God as children; consequently, on their parts, alienation and enmity cease. They no longer conceive of him as an avenging judge, or a hard master. They no longer dispute his authority, nor repine at his appointments. They become a willing people. They yield themselves to him. They cultivate peace in all their connections. The forgiveness and bounty they have received, teaches them likewise to forgive, and be kind, as they have opportunity. They pos-

\* Isa. xii. 1.



sefs such good things, as the world can neither give nor take away. Communion with God, grace, wisdom, and power. They serve him with their all, and are supported by his good Spirit in every trying circumstance. And they have a good hope, which enables them to rejoice in tribulation, and to smile in death.

If the wickedness and obstinacy of mankind were not so strongly described and exemplified in the Bible, and if we could forget that this obstinate perverseness was once our own character, we should find it difficult to conceive, after we understand the nature and design of the gospel, upon what grounds, a scheme so wisely and completely adapted to relieve men from misery, to promote their present comfort, and to secure their future happiness, should, instead of being received with thankfulness, generally excite contempt and opposition. Can the world afford a peace, which shall abide and cheer the heart, under all the changing circumstances incident to us in this mortal state? Can it propose any good, any honours, profit, or pleasures, worthy of being compared with the honour which cometh from God only, the  
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light of his countenance, and the riches of glory? Can the influence of the world preserve us from trouble, or support us under it, or deliver us out of it? Has it any charms capable of soothing the anguish of a wounded conscience? Can it obviate the stroke, or overcome the fear of death? Or can it inspire the soul with confidence and joy, in the contemplation of that approaching day, when we must all appear before the tribunal of the supreme Judge? That the world, if we possessed the whole of it, cannot do these things for us, is acknowledged by many, and felt by all. The gospel proposes a cordial for every care, a balm for every wound; and none who make the experiment of its efficacy are disappointed. In other cases, they who have received great obligations, may speak highly of their benefactor; and they, who beyond hope, have been recovered from a dangerous malady, may commend the skill and care of their physician, to those who are labouring under the same disease, without giving offence. But if they who have obtained life and peace by believing in Jesus, proclaim his goodness, and point him out to their fellow-sinners, as the only physician  
and

and Saviour of souls, their testimony is charged with folly, and their endeavours rejected with scorn, as officious and impertinent. Men, while left to themselves, will not come to him that they may have life. The God of this world so works upon their prejudices, pride, and passions, that though the light of truth shines around them like the light of the sun, the eyes of their mind are blinded, and they are pleased with their darknes, and unwilling to see \*. Hence of the few, comparatively, who are favoured with a clear and faithful dispensation of the gospel, the greater part, it is to be feared, reject the counsel of God against themselves: and his ministers, in all ages, have had cause to adopt the prophet's complaint, Lord, *who hath believed our report †*? It would be thus universally, if the Lord who gave the word, and who sends forth the preachers, had not engaged his promise, that they shall not labour wholly in vain, nor spend their strength for nought. He prepares a people to serve him, and to shew forth his praise. And while some mock, others refuse to hear ‡, and others, with an indolent indifference,

\* 2 Cor. iv. 4. † Isa. liii. 1. ‡ Acts xvii. 32.

are

are content to hear again and again, there are others, whose hearts are opened to receive the truth in the love of it. They hear and believe to everlasting life.

II. The instruments of this happy change, find their reward in their work. In being owned to the salvation of a few, they are compensated for all the opposition they meet with from the many. And this on a two-fold account.

First, and principally, *for the love they bear to their Lord and to souls for his sake.*

To see his name made precious to the hearts of sinners; to see those who were blind admiring his excellency; to see those who were so far off from God brought so nigh; to see those who were wretched rejoicing in his goodness; to hear those whose lips were filled with folly, falsehood, or blasphemy, proclaiming his praise. Such salutary effects of their ministry, fill *them* likewise with praise and joy. And when their hearers express the power and spirit of the gospel, in their tempers and conduct, they can say, *Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord* \*.

\* 1 Theff. iii. 8.

A secondary satisfaction, which of itself is sufficient to make them full amends for all the scorn of an unkind world, is, *the share they have in the affections of the people*, who are thus benefited by their ministry. This is the popularity which alone is desirable. It would be a small thing to be able merely to hold a multitude by the ears; but to be approved, and loved, by those to whom the Lord has made them useful, is a high honour, and a source of sublime pleasure. When Peter and John \* had healed the lame man, I doubt not but they were more affected by the simple honest testimony of his gratitude, than by the unmeaning wonder of all the surrounding multitude. If a true servant of the Lord, by any advantage of abilities or elocution, should attach a large congregation to a personal regard for himself; should be admired and beloved by them, and yet discover no attachment in them to the Saviour whom he preaches, their partiality to him would give him but little pleasure. He would be more ready to weep over them, than to rejoice in the preference they gave him. For he seeks not their applause, but:

\* Acts iii. 11.

their edification. And he aims not to promote his own glory, but the glory of him who sent him \*. He is, indeed, glad to see them attending upon the means which God has promised to bless. But the faithfulness and closeness of his addresses to their consciences, by which many are sooner or later disgusted and driven away, is a proof that he does not want them merely to make up a number about him. They who make the office of a preacher an occasion whereby to promote their own interest or reputation, may, perhaps, obtain the reward they seek ; but it is such a reward, as can only satisfy a weak and mercenary mind. And from him, whose name they prostitute, they can only expect the reward assigned to hypocrites and unbelievers.

But true Christians will, and do, set a high value upon the ministers, who with simplicity and godly sincerity, preach the gospel of peace, in such a manner as to evidence that they are influenced by a regard to the glory of God, and to the good of souls. And they give proof of their affection in more ways than by speaking well of them.

† John vii. 18.

1. By

1. By the satisfaction with which they accept a faithful ministry, as a balance to the trials they meet with in common life. There are many poor, and many afflicted people, who have little comfort in the things of this life, and in their own houses. Some are pinched by penury, and some who live in opulence, yet dwell, as the Psalmist expresses it \*, in the fire and among lions. They suffer not less than the others, though in a different way, from the unkindness and opposition of their nearest connections. But in the house of God, they are satisfied and comforted. And, according to the words of the prophet, though the Lord is pleased to give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction †, yet, since their teachers are not removed into corners, but they have free access to the preaching of his word, and can attend upon a minister who careth for their souls, and meets them, when they are weary, *with a word in season*, they bear their appointed cross with cheerfulness. Though they have much bitterness of heart at home, known only to themselves, they have a pleasure which a stranger intermedleth

\* Ps. lvii. 4.

† Isa. xxx. 20.

not with, when they go up to the house of the Lord. But if the instrument, who is the messenger of God to them for good be removed, and they are deprived of these opportunities, the regard they bore him is manifested, by their sorrow for losing him; which often affects them more sensibly than all their other griefs.

2. By taking kindly and in good part his most searching discourses in public, or even his reproofs and admonitions in private, if needful. For they know that he watches over their souls, as one who must give an account \*. And because they love him, they do all in their power to make the service a pleasure, and not a grief to him. They do not wish him to speak smooth things to them, or to entertain them with the discussion of points in which they have little concern, but to hear that which is suitable to their own case and circumstances. And if the preacher discovers to them, that through inadvertence, they have allowed themselves in any wrong practice, or have lived in the omission of any duty, instead of

\* Heb. xiii. 17.

being



being offended with his plain dealing, they love him the better for it.

3. By their tendernefs and fympathy with him in all his exercifes ; and by their care, according to their ability, to make his fituation comfortable, and to avoid every thing that might give him juft occafion for complaint or grief. The trials of a faithful minifter, are neither few nor fmall. His work is great ; he is fure to meet with enemies and difcouragements. He travels in birth for fouls \* ; he is pained by the oppofition of the wicked, the inconfancy of the wavering, and the inconfifteny of many who make profeflion of the truth. He feels many anxieties for thofe who are enquiring the way to the kingdom, left they fhould be turned afide and hindered ; and too often the hopes he had indulged, of fome who difcovered a concern for religion, are difappointed. His inward conflicts are many. He often walks in much weaknefs, fear, and trembling †. When he confiders what he is, what he ought to be, and what he has to do, he is often diftrefled, afraid, and afhamed, and unable to fpeak. His path is fpread

\* Gal. iv. 19.

† 1 Cor. ii. 3.

with snares, his heart wounded with temptations. But his judicious hearers have some knowledge of what he endures for their sakes, and in their service; they love him, pity him, and pray for him, and their kind attention comforts him under all his tribulations.

Sometimes their regard is rather improperly expressed; as when they not only value his ministry, but hold him so highly a favourite, that they can hardly hear another. A preference is certainly due to the person who is made especially useful, but no faithful preacher should be slighted. Though gifts and abilities are not equal in all, yet, they are all the Lord's messengers, and entitled to regard.

Again, it is an improper regard, if they yield themselves implicitly to him, to be governed by his will. So far as we speak agreeably to the scripture, which is the rule and standard of faith and practice, both to you and to us, we are authorized to require your attention and obedience; but you are not bound to receive what we propose, merely upon our own authority. There are those who account ignorance the mother of devo-

tion, and expect an implicit compliance with their injunctions, by virtue of their office and personal influence. But a true minister, will account it his honour and pleasure to preach to an enlightened people, who love and study the bible, and, like the Bereans, search the scripture \*, to see if things are so as represented. *We have no dominion over your faith, but wish to be helpers of your joy †.* Nor do we pretend to dominion over your purses, though we are to remind you of the apostle's charge, *To do good and to communicate forget not ‡.*

How much are they to be pitied, who account that word of grace a burden, which to those who receive it with thankfulness, proves the balm and cordial of life! *Take heed how you hear.* If the gospel is not made to you a favor of life, it will be a favor of death. It will aggravate your guilt and condemnation, and leave you utterly hopeless and inexcusable. If you continue impenitent and obstinate, the hour is coming, when you will wish you had never heard of the name of Jesus. It had been better for you never to have been born, or to have

\* Acts xvii. 11. † 2 Cor. i. 24. ‡ Heb. xiii. 16.

lived and died among the savage Indians; or to have been an idiot or a lunatic to the end of your days, than to have lived where the doctrine of salvation was published in your hearing, if you finally reject the counsel of God against yourselves!

# S E R M O N XXXII.

THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

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ROM. x. 18.

*—Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.*

**T**HE heavens declare the glory of God\*.

The grandeur of the arch over our heads, the number and lustre of the stars, the beauty of the light, the splendor of the sun, the regular succession of day and night, and of the seasons of the year, are such proofs of infinite wisdom and power, that the scripture attributes to them a voice, a universal language, intelligible to all mankind, accommodated to every capacity. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not

\* Ps. xix. 1.

heard.

heard. The combined effect of the visible works of the great Architect, presses a declaration upon the ear of reason—*The hand that made us is divine.* We must, however, understand it of the ear of right reason. The loudest voice is unnoticed by the deaf. Thus it ought to be, and thus it would be, if man were indeed a rational creature, as he proudly boasts himself. That the fact in general is otherwise; that the bulk of mankind are no more affected by the works of God, than the beasts of the field: that the philosophers who profess to study them, so faintly discern, so frequently deny, the great first Cause of all, is a proof that sin has darkened and depraved the noblest powers of the soul, and degraded man into the state of an inattentive idiot. However the evidence, if it does not excite his admiration and praise, is abundantly sufficient to convict him of stupidity and ingratitude, and to leave him without excuse\*.

This passage, taken from that sublime ode of David, the nineteenth psalm, is applied by the apostle to illustrate the character, and the progress of the still more wonderful dis-

\* Rom. i. 20.

play of the divine perfections, which God has made known by the glorious gospel. A variety of truths shine (like stars in the firmament) in the system of revelation. But principally Jesus the sun of truth and righteousness, the source of spiritual light and life, answers to the description there given of the material sun, *His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from his heat* \*.

But the fulfilment of the promises respecting MESSIAH'S kingdom is progressive. So far as this prophecy has been accomplished, the arm of the Lord has been revealed. It is his doing, and may justly be marvellous in our eyes. The truth of the prophecy will be proved by its final completion; which, though not likely to take place in our time, we may be assured that it cannot fail, for the Lord hath spoken it. And besides, we have a sufficient pledge and security for the whole, in what he has already done. It was not necessary for the fulfilling of this prophecy, nor consistent with the tenor of many other prophecies, that the spread of the gospel should be instantaneous and uni-

\* Ps. xix. 6.

versal on its first publication. MESSIAH is to rule in the midst of his enemies, till the appointed season, when all enemies shall be subdued under his feet. The gospel, the rod of his power, is so admirably adapted to the necessities of mankind, that the obstructions it has met with, must be ascribed to their wickedness and obstinacy. Not that they could resist the will of God. Had he intended to give it universal success from the beginning, the event would have been answerable. But it was his pleasure to conduct the dispensation of it, so as on the one hand to display his sovereignty, wisdom and power, and on the other, to afford a full proof of the depravity and alienation of the heart of man. This point is so much misunderstood and misrepresented, that though it is attended with great difficulties, especially if we give way to vain reasonings upon it, I shall venture in the present discourse to offer a few thoughts towards clearing the subject, and vindicating (if the very attempt be not presumptuous) the ways of God to man.

When the Sun of righteousness, after a long night of darkness, arose upon the world, there appeared a strong probability that the

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prophecies concerning the extent of his vital influence, from east to west, from pole to pole, would soon be compleatly realized. In a very short space he was known and adored by multitudes, through the greatest part of the Roman empire, and beyond its limits. But, perhaps, for about seventeen hundred years since that period, the boundaries of his kingdom, though they have been altered, have not been much enlarged. If he has since in some measure enlightened the more western parts of the globe, the eastern regions, which one rejoiced in his light, are now overwhelmed with gross Mahomedan darkness. And if we were capable of investigating the state of the world at this day, we should probably find, that five out of six of the human race now living, never so much as heard of the name of Jesus as a Saviour. There is reason to fear likewise, that in the nations who professedly call him Lord, and are not unwilling to be themselves called Christians, a greater proportion than of five out of six, are no less strangers to his power and grace, than the Mahomedans who reject him, or the Heathens who never heard of him.

There

There is not perhaps a darker chapter in the book of divine providence, nor a meditation which calls for a more absolute subjection and submission to the holy will and unfathomable wisdom of God, than this. The first spread of the gospel proved it to be a divine expedient, fully capable of producing all the great purposes which the prophets had foretold, and which the state of the world required. It reconciled men to God, to themselves, and to each other. It subdued their passions, regulated their affections, freed them from the guilt and bondage of sin, from the love of the world, and from the fear of death. Wherever the doctrine of the cross was preached, it produced that salutary change of conduct, which philosophy had long attempted in vain; and raised men to that life of communion with God, of which philosophers had no conception. Such was the bright morning of the gospel day. But in time, yea, in a little time, dark clouds obscured its light, its progress was impeded, and in a manner stopped. On one hand, the profession and name of the gospel, gave occasion to mischiefs and abominations, which had been unknown among  
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the heathens; so that the part of the world which received the name of Christendom, was little distinguished from the rest, in a religious view, but by a fierce and rancorous superstition which tyrannized over the consciences, liberties, and the lives of men. On the other hand, as I have observed, the very name of christianity, was restrained to a small portion of the earth; many nations have not heard of it to this day, and many who once professed it, have renounced it long ago.

Thus the fact stands. We cannot deny it. But how shall we account for it? Infidels and petty-reasoners think they here find an invincible objection against the truth. They say, “ If the gospel you speak of, be  
 “ so salutary and necessary, if it be indeed  
 “ the greatest effect of the divine goodness,  
 “ why has not God, who is the common  
 “ Father of mankind, afforded it to all the  
 “ nations of the earth? And why is it re-  
 “ strained to so few?” But I think we may re-  
 tort the question, and let them who propose it, give such an answer (if they can) as shall not amount to a confession of the obstinacy and ungrateful folly of mankind. When the  
 world

world saw the happy tendency and effects of this gospel in the age of the apostles, why did they not universally receive it? We know that when the use of the mariner's compass, the art of printing, and many other inventions that might be named, were discovered in one country, they were presently adopted by the surrounding civilized nations. Even the recent attempts to venture through the air with a balloon, hazardous as they certainly are, and insignificant with respect to real usefulness, are likely in a little time not only to engage the notice, but to excite the imitation, of Europe. Why then was the gospel, the most beneficial and important discovery the world has been favoured with, the only one that has been treated with general contempt? Certainly, our Lord has assigned the true reason, *Light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil\**. They hate the light, they will not come to it, nor will they permit it to come to them if they can possibly prevent it. This glorious gospel of the blessed God, has been and still is shunned and dreaded, and every human pre-

\* John iii. 19.

caution and exertion has been employed to withstand and suppress it, as though, like the pestilence, it was baneful to the welfare of society. May we not say, speaking after the manner of men, that the Lord has done enough to confirm his own express and solemn declaration, that he *has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked may turn from his way and live* \* ! He has raised up a succession of faithful servants, from age to age, to publish these glad tidings. The reception they have met with, not only from the heathens, but from nominal christians, is well known to those who are acquainted with ecclesiastical history ; which contains little more than a detail of the arts and cruelties, by which the civil and ecclesiastical powers of almost every kingdom where the gospel has been known, have endeavoured to suppress it.

The nation of Great-Britain, in particular, has but little right to ask, Why the gospel of Christ has been spread no farther among the heathen ? The providence of God has favoured us with peculiar advantages for this service. Our arms and commerce have open-

\* Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

ed us a way to the most distant parts of the globe; and of late years, the enterprising spirit of our navigators, has added almost a new world to the discoveries of former times. How far have our plans been formed with a subserviency to the great design of evangelizing the heathen? How much have we done to promote it in Asia, where our influence and opportunities have been the greatest? What impression of the name and spirit of christianity has our conduct given to the inhabitants of India? But I forbear—Facts are too well known to need recital; too glaring to need a comment. It is true, we have an incorporated society for propagating the gospel in foreign parts, and we hear of missionaries; but of the good effects of their missions, as at present conducted, we neither hear, nor expect to hear. While America was ours, the efforts of a few individuals from the northern provinces in the last and present century, were not without success. But I fear this is all the honour we can claim. Some good has been done by the Danish mission to Tranquebar, but I believe our influence in it, has been rather nominal than effective. The extent and effects of the labours of  
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the *Unitas Fratrum*\*, compared with their circumstances and resources, must not be omitted on this occasion. They doubtless excite admiration, and thankfulness to God, in every serious mind acquainted with the subject. But excepting in these instances, I believe the heathens have derived but little knowledge of the gospel, from their connections with Christendom for some ages past. And I think none of the commercial nations in Europe, have had the propagation of christianity less at heart than the English. What obligations the natives of Africa are under to us, for instruction or example, may be estimated, in part, by a cursory survey of the state of our West-India islands.

That the gospel is so little known in the world, and so little received where it is known, cannot be so properly ascribed to the will of God, as to the wickedness and wilfulness of men. Undoubtedly he to whom all things are possible, who has absolute power over the hearts of his creatures, could make a way for the universal reception of it. And we trust that in his own time he will do so.

\* More generally known amongst us, by the name of the Brethren, or Moravians.

But *Power* is not his only attribute. It would be rash and absurd to suppose that the great God *will* do, every thing that he *can* do. We are sure that he will do what is worthy of himself; but of this, his own infinite wisdom is the only competent judge. What is becoming of his perfections and holy government, we can know no farther than he is pleased to inform us. But it certainly becomes us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, when we contemplate his conduct. Or, if we do speak, to adopt the apostle's language, *Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For of him, and through him, and to him are all things. To whom be glory for ever\**.

However, my text is fulfilling, and shall be fulfilled. This joyful sound has already been spread far abroad, in defiance of all attempts to restrain it. Multitudes from age to age have heard it, and found it to be the power of God unto salvation. And it would be easy to prove, if it belonged to my subject, that the superior advantages of civiliza-

\* Rom. xi. 36.



tion which Christendom enjoys, are remotely owing to the knowledge of revelation. To this must be chiefly ascribed, the different state of this island, from what it was when visited by Julius Cæsar. Yea, our modern philosophers would make but a poor figure, were they despoiled of all the plumes they have borrowed from the book they affect to despise. Farther, the purpose of God to save sinners, by faith in his beloved Son, is the primary ground of that patience and long-suffering which he still exercises towards such a world as this. And some imperfect traces of this design, transmitted by tradition, are probably to be found, though wofully disfigured, among every nation and people under heaven: which have at least preserved, in a degree, the notices of right and wrong, and some faint warnings of conscience, in the most savage state of human nature. But were it not for reasons connected with the designs of his mercy, we can scarcely conceive that the holy God would have perpetuated the race of mankind in a state of rebellion and enmity against his government. Or if he had permitted them to multiply, and left them wholly and abso-

lutely to themselves, without interposing some restraints upon their depravity, I believe the inhabitants of the earth, would have been no better than incarnate fiends.

The prophecies both of the Old and New Testament, encourage us to hope for a time, when the light of gospel truth will break forth with meridian brightness, the glory of the Lord be revealed, and all flesh shall see his salvation. As a pledge of this, and of the truth of the whole scripture, we have, what may be called a standing miracle continually before our eyes. I mean the state of the Jews, who, though dispersed far and wide among many nations, are every where preserved a distinct and separate people. The history of the world affords no other instance of the like kind. The great monarchies, by which they were successively conquered and scattered, have successively perished. Only the names of them remain. But the people whom they despised, and endeavoured to exterminate, subsist to this day; and though sifted like corn over the earth, and *apparently* forsaken of God, are still preserved by his wonderful providence, unaffected by the changes and customs around them; still tenacious

cious of the law of Moses, though the observance of it is rendered impracticable. Many days, many ages they have lived, as the prophets foretold they should, without a temple, without sacrifice or priest\*. As yet, many heathen nations are permitted to walk in their own ways. But at length *the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved* †. The revolutions and commotions in kingdoms and nations, which astonish and perplex politicians, are all bringing forward this great event. The plan of the human drama, to us, who only see a single scene, is dark and intricate, but the catastrophe is approaching; and in the close of the whole, the manifold wisdom of God will be admired and adored, and all holy and happy intelligences, will acknowledge with transport, *He has done all things well.*

But the point I am chiefly to press upon my hearers, is, that this word of salvation is sent to you ‡. How the great Judge will deal with the heathens, who were never favoured with it, he has not seen fit distinctly to inform us. But thus far he has assured

\* Hos. iii. 4, 5. † Rom. xi. 25, 26. ‡ Acts xiii. 26.

us, that it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yea for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for those who have the privilege of knowing the gospel, if they reject it\*. To them much is given, and of them much will be required. Do not think ministers assuming if they magnify their office. We have no reason to think highly of ourselves. Nor would you be blameable for disregarding us if we spoke in our own names. But if we preach the truth of the gospel, in simplicity and sincerity, then we speak in the name of the Lord, and demand your attention. Do you ask for our authority and commission? Ask your own consciences. If, like Felix, when you mean only to indulge your curiosity by hearing us, you are constrained to tremble †: if we force upon your mind the remembrance of what you have said or done; if our message makes you uneasy and dissatisfied with yourselves; if you cannot avoid feeling at some times the truth of our principles, and the necessity of the change we would press upon you; if, though you have been repeatedly displeased and offended with what you hear,

\* Matt. xi. 20—24.

† Acts xxiv. 25.

and,

and, perhaps, have gone away purposing or threatening that you would hear it no more, you still appear amongst us—then, you have a sufficient proof, that the ministers are sent and authorized to speak to you, and we take your consciences to witness that we preach the truth.

S E R.

# S E R M O N   X X X I I I .

OPPOSITION TO MESSIAH UNREASONABLE.

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P S A L M   ii.   1—3.

*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed; saying, Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast away his cords from us.*

**I**T is generally admitted, that the institutes of Christianity, as contained in the New Testament, do at least exhibit a beautiful and salutary system of morals; and that a sincere compliance with the precepts of our Lord and his apostles, would have a good effect upon society. Few infidels have ventured to contradict the common sense of mankind,

kind,

kind, so far as to deny this. Nor can it be denied, that the author of this institution, if we judge by the history and character given of him by the evangelists, exemplified, in the highest perfection, by his own conduct, the precepts which he enjoined to his followers. While he lived as a man amongst men, the tenor of his behaviour was such as became the friend of mankind. Though he submitted to a low estate, and often suffered hunger, thirst, and weariness, we do not read of his having wrought a single miracle, merely for his own relief. But the wants and calamities of others, continually excited his compassion, and engaged his assistance. He gave sight to the blind, health to the sick, and sometimes wiped away the tears of mourners, by restoring their dead to life. He endured hunger himself; but, once and again, provided food for multitudes, lest they, having nothing to eat, should faint by the way. Nor did he confine his acts of benevolence to his followers, but was easy of access, and granted the requests of all indiscriminately, who applied to him. *He went about doing good* \*, and often put him-

\* Acts x. 38.

self in the way of those who would not otherwise have known him. And though he was opposed, calumniated, and laughed to scorn, he continued unwearied, and determined in the same cause, bestowing benefits on all around him, as occasions offered, and returning good for evil. May we not with reason ask, Why then did Jews and Heathens, priests and people, scribes and Sadducees, rage so furiously against him who did nothing amiss, who did all things well? Why did persons of the most opposite interests, parties, and sentiments, who could agree in nothing else, so cordially agree in opposing MESSIAH?

His gospel breathes the spirit of the great Author, and has a direct tendency to make men happy and useful. Wherever it was published, in the first age, among the Heathens, many of them turned from the worship of dumb idols, to serve the living and true God. It taught and enabled them to renounce *ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly* \*. And it still produces the same effects. The world now bears the name of Christian, but under

\* Titus ii. 12.

this



this new and honourable name, it retains the same spirit as formerly. Many who are called Christian, are no less under the power of evil tempers and evil habits, than the Heathens to whom the apostles preached, But where the gospel of the grace of God reaches the heart, a real and observable change is produced. The profane person learns to fear an oath, the libertine is reclaimed, the drunkard becomes sober, and the miser kind. Wherever the truth of the gospel is known and received, instances may be found of persons who were a terror and a burden to their families, being delivered from the stings of a guilty conscience, from the dominion of headstrong passions, from the slavery of habitual wickedness, and made peaceful, useful, and exemplary members of society, by what the apostle calls the preaching of the cross. And we challenge history to shew, that an abiding, consistent reformation, was ever effected by any other doctrine, in a single province, or city, or village, or even in a single family.

What then shall we say of that zeal which kindled the fire of persecution against our Lord and his apostles, and his followers,  
through

through a succession of ages? What is the common principle, the bond of union, which at this day connects people who differ so widely in other respects, and points their displeasure, from all sides, against this one object? In a former discourse, I briefly mentioned the principal grounds of that dislike which the Jews manifested to MESSIAH'S personal ministry \*; and I observed that they are deeply rooted in the nature of fallen man, and therefore not peculiar to any one age or nation. The gospel always did, and always will, produce the same happy change, in those who receive it; and provoke the same opposition and resentment in those who do not. The actings will be different as circumstances vary, but the principle is universally the same. In this island, which the good providence of God has distinguished by many signal and peculiar favours; the spirit of our constitution and government, is friendly to liberty of conscience, and the rights of private judgment; so that our religious profession does not expose us to the penalties of fire and sword, stripes or tortures, imprisonment or banishment. Such trials have been the lot of our forefathers;

\* Vol. I. Sermon XVII.

when

when the servants of God, under the names of *gospellers*, or *puritans*, were treated as heretics of the worst sort. We are bound to acknowledge with thankfulness, the blessings of religious and civil liberty which we enjoy. But the world at large around us, is not more favourably disposed to the grace and rule of MESSIAH'S kingdom, than it was in the days of Heathen and Popish darkness. The tongue, at least, is unrestrained, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, The gospel offends the pride of men, by considering them all on a level, as sinners in the sight of God; and by proposing only one method of salvation, without admitting any difference of plea or character. It offends them likewise by its strictness. Like Herod, they might, perhaps, consent to do many things \*, if they were left at liberty to please themselves in others, in which, though expressly contrary to the will of God, they will not submit to be controlled. And therefore they are much displeas'd with the gospel; which, by affording no allowance or connivance to the least known sin, but prescribing a rule

\* Mark vi. 20.

of universal holiness, crosses their inclinations and favourite interests. When Paul preached at Ephesus, Demetrius and his companions perceived that their craft was in danger. This was the real cause of their anger, but they were ashamed to avow it; and therefore their ostensible reason for opposing him, was of a religious kind \*, and they professed a great concern for the honour of Diana. Few, perhaps, would have given themselves much trouble, to promote or preserve the gain of the craftsmen; but a pretended regard for the worship which had been long established, was a popular topic, which wrought powerfully upon the superstition of the ignorant multitude, and thousands were presently induced to join with them in the cry, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*.

The like arts are still practised, with the like success. The same secret motives, are disguised by the same plausible pretences. The deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart appears in no one instance more plainly, than in the cavils which are repeated and multiplied against the grace of the gos-

\* Acts xix. 28.

pel. When we preach a free salvation by faith in Jesus, and propose his obedience unto death, as the sure and only ground of acceptance with God; when we say, in the words of the apostle, to the vilest of sinners who feel the burden, and fear the consequences of their sins, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved* \*, an alarm is raised, and a concern pretended for the interests of morality. The doctrine of *salvation by faith only*, is charged with opening a door, a flood-gate for licentiousness; and it is supposed, that if this doctrine be true, people may live as they please, and still comfort themselves with the expectation of heaven at last. Considering our natural propensity to trust in ourselves that we are righteous, I do not wonder that persons who are comparatively sober and decent, should speak thus, while they are ignorant of the strictness of the holy law of God, and of the depravity of their own hearts. But I sometimes wonder that they are not a little disconcerted, by the characters of many (so different from what they suppose their own to be) who join with them in the objections

\* Acts xvi. 31.

they make. For in this point, with the sober and decent, the licentious and profligate readily concur; and whoremongers, adulterers, drunkards, and profane swearers, almost equal them in gravely expressing their apprehensions, that the doctrine of salvation by grace, will prove very unfavourable to the practice of good works. How very remarkable is this—that the virtuous and the vile, the most respectable and the most infamous people, should so frequently agree in sentiment, and unite in opposing the gospel, professedly from the same motive. But thus it was at the commencement of MESSIAH'S kingdom, kings, rulers, priests, and people, all conspired and raged against him. Herod and Pilate, the Jewish elders and the Roman soldiers, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, thus differed, and thus agreed. They hated each other till he appeared; but their greater common hatred to him, made them act in concert, and they suspended their mutual animosity, that they might combine to destroy him.

I may seem to have digressed from the immediate scope of my text, but I judge it proper to bring the subject home to ourselves.

If I confined myself to prove that the enemies of our Lord, when he was upon earth, were very unreasonable and unjust in treating him as they did, I should have an easy task, and, I suppose, the ready assent of all my hearers. But there may be persons present, who, though they little suspect themselves, are equally misled by prejudices ; and under a semblance of zeal for a form of godliness, oppose the truth and power of it, upon the same principles and in the same spirit, as the Jews and Heathens did of old. The Jews who condemned MESSIAH to death, blamed their forefathers for persecuting the prophets who foretold his appearance \* ; but their own conduct towards him was a proof, that had they lived in the days of the prophets, they would have acted as their fathers had done. So the resentment that many, who bear the Christian name in this day, discover against the doctrines of the gospel, and against the people who profess them, is a proof that they would have concurred with those who crucified the Lord of glory, had they lived in Jerusaleſem at that time.

\* Matt. xxiii. 30, 31.

In this prophecy, David, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, speaks of the future as actually present. He saw the resistance that would be made to the person and kingdom of MESSIAH, by the powers of the world; that they would employ their force and policy to withstand and suppress the decree and appointment of God. The question, Why? implies that their opposition would be both groundless and ineffectual.

1. *It was entirely groundless and unreasonable.* MESSIAH was indeed a king, and he came to set up a kingdom that should endure for ever. But his kingdom is not of this world; and, if rightly understood, would give no umbrage to human governments. It does not interfere with the rights of princes. His subjects are indeed primarily bound by the laws of their immediate king, and they must *obey God rather than man*\*, if man will presume to enjoin such laws as contradict his known will. But with this exception, it is a part of the duty they owe to their Lord, to obey those whom he has placed, by his providence, in authority over them. The kingdom of MESSIAH has little to do with

\* Acts v. 29.



what we call politics. His people are taught *to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*\*, and to yield a peaceful subjection to the powers that be, under whatever form of government their lot may be cast. They are *strangers and pilgrims upon earth* †, their citizenship, treasures, and conversation are in heaven; and they have no more direct concern with the intrigues and parties of politicians, than a traveller has in the feuds and disturbances which may happen in a foreign country through which he is passing. They are to obey God, they are to obey kings and governors in subordination to God, they are to render to all their due; *tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, honour to whom honour* ‡. But where they cannot comply with the laws of government, without breaking the laws of God, then they are not to obey, but to suffer patiently, committing their cause to him whom they serve; well knowing that he is able to protect or relieve them, so far as his wisdom judges it fit, and to make them abundant amends for all they can suffer for his sake. I am not a direct advocate for the

\* Matt. xxii. 21. † 1 Pet. ii. 11. ‡ Rom. xiii. 1, 2.  
doctrines

doctrines of passive obedience, and non-resistance, in the largest sense. I set a great value upon the blessings of civil and religious liberty, I reverence the constitutional rights of nations, particularly of our own. But they are all dependant upon the will of our Lord; and I know not by what means they can be preserved to a people, when their sins have made them ripe for judgment. But *let the dead bury their dead* \*. God will never want instruments, when it is his pleasure to relieve the oppressed, or to abate the proud. For these purposes, he overrules the counsels and affairs of men, pours contempt upon the designs of princes, and takes the wise in their own craftiness. The subjects of his spiritual kingdom have only to commit their cause to him, to wait upon him, to observe and to admire his management. Their best interest is always safe. And even the troubles they meet with, are appointed for their good. But if they so far conform to the world, as to take an active and decided part in the disputes and contentions around them, they usually dishonour their Christian character, and obstruct their

\* Matt. viii. 22.

own peace and comfort. There may possibly be some exceptions. God may sometimes place a servant of his, by the leading of his providence, in a post of high political importance, as he did Joseph and Daniel, but I believe such instances are few; and if any venture of their own accord, beyond the proper line of their calling, as Christians, the event is usually grief and loss to them. They are described in his word, as those *who are quiet in the land* \*, and such should be their department.

We are sure it was thus, in the first and golden days of Christianity. The Roman government was then absolute, arbitrary, and oppressive. Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, and others, who presided over it, and bore the name of Roman emperors, were beyond measure vile and abominable: one of them was, by a decree of the Roman senate, sentenced to death as a public enemy to mankind—but the Christians neither disputed their right, nor disobeyed their authority. Kings and rulers, therefore, have nothing to fear from the gospel of Christ. The maxims of sound policy would engage all their influence

\* Ps. xxxv. 20.

in facilitating its progress, for true Christians will assuredly be good subjects. Impatience of subordination, contempt of lawful authority, tumults, riots, and conspiracies, are evils which would have no place, if the gospel was generally received. But princes have been usually exposed to the flattery of designing men, who, by their arts and misrepresentations, have seduced them to act contrary to their true interests. Their mistaken efforts to suppress that cause, which, if maintained, would have been the best security of their thrones, have often stained the annals of their reign with innocent blood, and filled their dominions with misery. History furnishes many instances of kings, who might otherwise have lived beloved, and died lamented, that have involved themselves and their families in the calamities with which they unjustly punished those who deserved their protection. For

2. Opposition to MESSIAH and his kingdom, is no less *vain and ineffectual*, than unreasonable and groundless. Nor is it vain only, but ruinous to those who engage in it. What did the Jews build, when they rejected the foundation stone which  
 God

God had laid in Zion? They acted, as they thought, with precaution and foresight. They said, *If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and our nation* \*. Foolish politicians! Did they preserve their city by crucifying the Son of God! The very evil they feared came upon them. Or rather, being abandoned of God to their own counsels, they brought it upon themselves. In a few years, the Romans, with whom they appeared so desirous to keep upon good terms, destroyed their city with an unheard of destruction, and exterminated them from the land. This was an emblem of the inevitable, total, irreparable ruin, which awaits all those who persist in rejecting the rule of MESSIAH. The nation, the individual, that will not serve him must surely perish.

Ah! If sinners did but know what the bonds and cords are, which they are so determined to break; if they knew that his service is perfect freedom; if they were aware what more dreadful bonds and chains they are riveting upon themselves, by refusing

\* John xi. 48.

his easy yoke, they would throw down their arms and submit. They think, if they yield to the gospel, they must bid adieu to pleasure. But what will become of their pleasure, when the day of his forbearance being expired, he will speak to them in his wrath, and fill them with hopeless horror and dismay?

Bless the Lord, ye favoured few, whose eyes are opened, whose hearts are softened, and who are become the willing people of this Saviour. Yet a little while and he will appear again, and then you also shall appear with him in glory!

# S E R M O N XXXIV.

OPPOSITION TO MESSIAH IN VAIN.

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PSALM ii. 4.

*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the  
Lord shall have them in derision.*

**T**H E extent and efficacy of the depravity of mankind, cannot be fully estimated, by the conduct of heathens destitute of divine revelation. We may say of the gospel, in one sense, what the apostle says of the law, *It entered that sin might abound* \*. It afforded occasion for displaying the alienation of the heart of man from the blessed God, in the strongest light. The sensuality, oppression and idolatry which have prevailed in all ages, sufficiently prove the wickedness

\* Rom. v. 20.

of men to be very great. But the opposition which they, who have rebelled against the government of their Creator, make to the proposals of his grace, is a proof still more striking. If sin has so hardened their hearts, and blinded their eyes, that of themselves they neither can nor will implore his mercy; yet it might be thought that if the great God, whom they have so heinously offended, should be pleased, of his own goodness, to make the *first overtures* of reconciliation, and to invite them to receive pardon, they would gladly attend to his gracious declaration; especially, when they are informed, that to preserve them from perishing, he gave up his only Son to sufferings and death. But when they not only defy his power but insult his goodness; when they reject and blaspheme the Saviour whom he commends to them; when they are but the more exasperated by his tenders of mercy; when they scorn his message, and persecute his messengers by whom he entreats them to be reconciled, this mad and ungrateful carriage, shews such a rooted enmity against God in fallen men, as even the fallen angels are not capable of discovering. For MESSIAH *took not*



on him the nature of angels, nor did he make proposals of mercy to them. But he did take upon him our nature. He visited us in person, for us he lived a sufferer, and died that we might live. The prophets foresaw and foretold the reception he would meet with, and their predictions were fulfilled. The Jews who professed to expect him, and the heathens who had not heard of him, united their utmost efforts to withstand and defeat the purposes of his unexampled love. What must the holy angels think of the baseness, presumption and obstinacy of such creatures!

But rebellion against God is not only wickedness, but folly and infatuation in the extreme. *Who ever hardened himself against the Lord and prospered\*?* He whom they opposed, and against whom they thought they had prevailed, when they saw him dead upon the cross, soon resumed his glory, and his throne. The text therefore principally respects the opposition made to his gospel and to his kingdom, after his ascension, which is still carrying on, but which always was, and always will be in vain. The words I

\* Job ix. 4.

have read offer two points for the consolation of those who love him, and for the timely consideration of those who have hitherto disregarded him.

I. *That he sitteth in the heavens.*

II. The notice he taketh of his enemies. *He smiles at their rage*, and treats both their power and their policy with contempt.

I. He whom God has anointed (therefore called MESSIAH) he against whom kings and rulers, nations and the people rage, *sitteth in the heavens*. He has finished his great work, and entered into his rest; having by himself *purged our sins*, he is immoveably seated on his throne, *at the right hand of the Majesty on high*\*. He is the Head, King and Lord of principalities, dominions and powers, possessed of all authority, unchangeably fixed over all, *God blessed for evermore* †. In this character he is the Representative, High Priest, Advocate and Shepherd of all who put their trust in him. He is ever mindful of them. While he is preparing a place for them near himself, by the power of his Spirit he maintains an intercourse with them, and manifests himself to them as he does not

\* Heb. i. 3.

† Rom. ix. 5.

to the world. By his providence, which ruleth over all, he manages their concerns upon earth, supplies their wants, and gives them present and effectual help and support in their time of trouble. To him their eyes and hearts are directed, *they look to him and are enlightened\**, strengthened, and comforted. And under his protection they are safe. He having taken charge of them, and engaged to save them to the uttermost, *no weapon formed against them can prosper*. Now they may draw nigh to God with boldness, for they have *One who ever liveth to make intercession for them*. Now they may lay aside all anxious uneasy cares, for they have a mighty Friend who careth for them. Now they may say, each one for himself, *I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength, and my song, and my salvation †*. Whether you have indeed fled to him for refuge as the hope set before you, committed your soul to him, and accepted him in all his offices, as your Prophet, Priest and King, is a point of experience; if you have he knows it, for he enabled you to do it; and he will not disappoint the hope, and

\* Ps. xxxiv. 5.

† Isa. xii. 2.

expectation, which he himself has wrought in you. If you have, methinks *you* must know it likewise. Have you not done it more than once? Do you not daily repeat this surrender of yourself to him? It is certainly possible to assent to the truths of the gospel, considered merely as doctrines or propositions, yea to plead and dispute for them with much seeming earnestness, and yet to be entirely a stranger to their power. But I trust that they to whom I now speak will understand me. Our Lord reminded Nathanael of what had passed under the fig-tree \*, when he thought himself alone. Do not I remind you of seasons, when no eye but the eye of him who seeth in secret was upon you? Did not you then and there, once and again, accept him as your Saviour upon the warrant of his own word, devote yourself to his service, resign yourself to his disposal, and entrust yourself to his care? Then fear not. He that sitteth in the heavens is on your side. If the premises be well grounded, the inference is sure. And though many may rise up against you, they shall not prevail, for he will *teach your hands to war,*

\* John i. 48.

*and your fingers to fight, will cover your head in the day of battle, and in the end make you more than conqueror.* For the battle is not your's, but the Lord's. Your enemies are his, and his cause is your's. They who associate against him shall be dashed in pieces, as the billows break and die upon a rocky shore.

II. The feebleness and insignificance of their rage against MESSIAH, is intimated by the manner in which he notices their proceedings. *He holds them in derision, he laughs them to scorn.* He has them perfectly under his controul, holds them in a chain when they think themselves most at liberty, appoints the bounds beyond which they cannot pass, and can in a moment check them, and make them feel his hook and bridle, when in the height of their career.

It is the Lord's pleasure not only to favour and to support his people, but to do it in such a way that it may appear to be wholly his own work, and that the praise belongs to him alone. And therefore he permits their enemies for a season to try if they can prevent his designs. For a season, things take such a course that their attempts seem to

prosper ; they threaten, they boast, and confidently expect to carry their point. But the contest always issues in their shame and confusion. He not only disconcerts their schemes, but makes them instrumental to the promoting of his own designs. Thus when he sent Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt, Pharaoh, instead of complying with his command, increased their burdens, added to the rigour of their bondage, and, though rebuked by a succession of severe judgments, he hardened himself the more, and was determined to detain them if he could. But he could not detain them a day or an hour beyond the appointed time, which God had long before made known to Abraham\*. Then they were delivered, and Pharaoh and his host overthrown in the Red Sea. Hereby the name of the God of Israel was more known, noticed and magnified, than it would have been, if Pharaoh had dismissed the people without reluctance or delay.

In like manner when MESSIAH left the earth, his followers were considered as sheep without a shepherd. The world conspired to suppress his cause, and to root out the

\* Exod. xii. 41, 42.

remembrance of his people. But the methods they employed counteracted their own designs. They who were dispersed by the persecution that followed the death of Stephen, preached the word wherever they went, the gospel spread from place to place, and the number of disciples daily increased. So that the Jewish rulers soon found themselves unequal to the task, and foreboded their own disappointment, *doubting whereunto these things would grow* \*. In some cases the Lord signally interposed, and shewed how entirely the lives and the hearts of his adversaries were in his hands. The haughty Herod was suddenly smitten by an invisible hand, with a loathsome and mortal disease †. He fell, devoured by worms, but the success of the gospel, which he had presumed to withstand, greatly increased and spread. The furious zeal of Saul of Tarsus ‡ against the truth, was silenced in a different manner. Jesus, whom he ignorantly persecuted, appeared to him in the way to Damascus, when he was *breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples*, disarmed his rage, made him a monument of his mercy,

\* Acts v. 24.

† Acts xii. 23.

‡ Acts ix.

and an earnest and successful preacher of the faith he had laboured to destroy.

From the Jews the business was transferred to the heathens, whose opposition was no less unavailing. Though they sometimes affected to boast that they had suppressed the christian name, the gospel was propagated in defiance of their attempts to prevent it. The worst and the best of the Roman emperors, were alike industrious, and alike unsuccessful, in their endeavours to stifle the work of God. At length, in the reign of Constantine, the christian religion obtained the sanction and protection of imperial authority.

But it soon appeared that the religion of the New Testament gained little advantage by this revolution. Though the worship of heathen idols gradually declined, and sunk into disrepute, the bulk of the people of all ranks were only changed in name. The world still lay in wickedness\*, and true christianity was still exposed to persecution. When the name of *Christian* ceased to be invidious and despicable, new names were soon invented to stigmatize the real servants of God; and ecclesiastical power gradually in-

\* 1 John v. 19.

creased,



creased, till the mystery of iniquity reigned for ages in the temple of God. The persecutions of popery equalled and exceeded those of paganism. And they who aspired to be christians indeed, were constrained, like the worthies of old, to *wander on mountains and in deserts, to hide themselves in dens and caves of the earth*\*. Yet, under all disadvantages, there was still a remnant, according to the election of grace, who could not be compelled to wear the mark of the beast. And while persecutors, who could only kill the body, seemed to weaken the church militant, they increased the number and the songs of the church triumphant.

To appearance the church of Christ was often brought low. It was very low at the time of the Reformation. But then it suddenly was revived, and broke forth like the sun from behind a dark cloud; and the light of the gospel was diffused far and wide, almost as at the beginning, in the apostles days. But protestants were quickly actuated by the same spirit, as their popish and pagan predecessors had been. The form of christianity was professed and protected, and the

\* Heb. xi. 38.

power of it denied and opposed. And to this day it remains a truth verified by experience, *that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must, in one way or other, suffer persecution* \*.

Of late years the sanguinary spirit, which, under pretence of doing God service, destroyed his people by fire and tortures, is much subsided. We live in a time when great pretences are made to candour and moderation. We have reason to be thankful for our religious liberty, to the good providence of God. But, so far as men are concerned, we are not indebted for it, to a just sense and acknowledgment of the right of private judgment, but to the prevalence of sceptical indifference and infidelity. The religion of the gospel was, perhaps, never more despised and hated than at present. We seem to be returning apace to the state of the primitive ages, when there were but two sorts of persons, christians and infidels. But notwithstanding all the arts and assaults of men, whether open enemies or pretended friends, the Bible is still extant, the gospel is still preached, yea, is still spreading. The

\* 2 Tim. iii. 12.

Lord has always had a people, though they have been often hidden from the general notice and observation of men. *He that sitteth in the heavens* laughs his opposers to scorn, and maintains his own cause in defiance of them all.

Surely if this work was not of God, the united efforts of kings, councils, popes, philosophers, the great, the wise, the decent, and the profligate, must have overthrown it long ago. If a miracle be demanded in proof of christianity, behold one! Though the world has been raging and plotting against it, from its first appearance; though it has been fiercely assaulted by those without, and shamefully betrayed by many within, it still subsists, it still flourishes. And subsist it shall, for it is maintained by him, who has the hearts of all men in his hands, and can controul or change them as he pleases. He can, and he will, suport and strengthen his people under all their sufferings. He can disappoint his adverstaries by unexpected events, divide them among themselves, and so manage them by his providence, as to make them protect and promote the very cause which they hate. And whenever he  
pleases

pleases he can, as it were, from the stones \*, raise up instruments to carry on his work, and to shew forth his praise. Therefore,

1. Let not his people tremble for the ark. Our eyes indeed should affect our hearts. It becomes us to be jealous for the Lord of hosts, to be concerned for the contempt and dishonour that is cast upon his government and grace, to be grieved for the abounding abominations of the day, and to pity and pray for obstinate finners who know not what they do. But we need not fear the failure of his promise. His truth and honour are engaged for the success of his gospel, and they must stand or fall together. It is a cause dearer to him than it can be us. The manifestation of his glory in the salvation of finners, by the doctrine of the cross, is the one great concern, for which the succession of day and night, and of the seasons of the year is continued, and the visible frame of nature is preserved. *He will work, and none shall lett it. The kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. The fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and the dispersed of Israel shall return to the*

\* Matt. iii. 9.

*Lord their God, and be saved.* These great events, to those who judge by an eye of sense, and according to the present state of things, may appear improbable or impossible. But the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? *His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back \* ?*

2. Think it neither strange nor hard, if any of you are called to suffer for the sake of the truth. Think it not *strange*; for thus it has been from the beginning. Think it not *hard*; for our sufferings are small, if compared with the lot of many who have lived before us. We are not called to resist unto blood. Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see such days of liberty as we are favoured with, but have not seen them.

3. Consider seriously, *Who is on the Lord's side ?* His is the strongest side and must prevail. If you have yielded yourselves to him, and taken upon you his yoke, your best interests are safe, your final happiness is secured. Nothing can separate you from his love. You shall be kept by his power through faith, *and no weapon formed against you shall prosper.* But

\* Isa. xiv. 27.

if you are against him, tremble, for the day of his wrath will come, it will *burn like an oven, and all the proud, and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, and shall leave them neither root nor branch* \*.

Turn therefore in time from your evil ways, submit yourselves unto him, and implore his mercy while he waiteth to be gracious, *that iniquity may not be your ruin.*

\* Mal. iv. 1.

# S E R M O N    X X X V .

OPPOSITION TO MESSIAH RUINOUS.

---

P S A L M    i i .    9 .

*Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron,  
thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's  
vessel.*

**T**H E R E is a species of the sublime in writing, which seems peculiar to the scripture, and of which, properly, no subjects, but those of divine revelation, are capable. With us things inconsiderable in themselves are elevated by splendid images, which give them an apparent importance beyond what they can justly claim. Thus the Poet, when describing a battle among bees, by a judicious selection of epithets and figures, excites in the minds of his readers, the idea of two  
I mighty

mighty armies contending for empire. But the works and ways of God are too great in themselves, to admit of any heightening representation. *We* conceive more forcibly of small things, by illustrations borrowed from those which are greater; but the scripture frequently illustrates great things, by contrasting them with those, which, in our estimation, are trivial and feeble. One instance, out of many which might be mentioned, is that truly sublime passage of the prophet, *And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree* \*. The apostle, when favoured with a heavenly vision, introduces the same thought, almost in the same words, *And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind: and the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together* †. Such forms of expression are becoming the Majesty of the great God, before whom the difference between the great and the small in our judg-

\* Isa. xxxiv. 4.

† Rev. vi. 13, 14.

ment,



ment, is annihilated. In his view, the earth, with all its inhabitants, are but as a drop which falls unnoticed from the bucket, or as the dust which cleaves to the balance\*, without affecting its equilibrium. At the same time, the simplicity of these illustrations, so well suited to confound the pride of the wise, is striking and obvious to the lowest capacities. If Homer or Virgil had been to describe the exertion and effect of the power of God, in subduing and punishing his enemies, they would probably have laboured for a simile sufficiently grand. But I much question if they would have thought of the image in my text, though none can be more expressive of utter irreparable ruin, or of the ease with which it is accomplished. *He shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel †.*

The series of the passages, we have lately considered, is very regular and beautiful. MESSIAH *ascended on high, and received gifts for men.* The first and immediate consequence of his exaltation in our nature, *is the publication of the gospel.* Then follows the happy and beneficial influence of the gospel on those who thankfully receive it. *How*

\* Isa. xl. 15.

† Ps. ii. 9.

*beautiful*

*beautiful are the feet of them that preach these glad tidings.* The next passage secures and describes its extensive progress—*The sound went forth into all the earth.* The opposition awakened by it is there described, First, as *unreasonable, Why do the Heathen rage?* Secondly, as *ineffectual, the Lord laughs at his opposers;* he sits upon his immoveable throne, and derides their attempts; Thirdly, the final issue of their mad resistance, *their confusion and ruin,* is the subject of the verse I have read, which prepares for the close of the second part of the Oratorio. His enemies shall perish, his kingdom shall be established and consummated. And then all holy intelligent beings shall join in a song of triumph, *Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.*

The two expressions of breaking with a rod of iron, and dashing in pieces, suggest nearly the same idea. But as elsewhere he is said, to *rule his enemies with a rod of iron* \*, I shall avail myself of this variation, in order to give you a more complete view of the dreadful state of those who oppose MESSIAH and his kingdom. He rules them at present with a rod

\* Rev. xix. 15.

of iron, and hereafter he will *dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel*. Let us, therefore, consider,

I. How the Lord MESSIAH rules over impenitent and obstinate sinners in the present life. They attempt (in vain) to withdraw from his subjection. They oppose his holy will. They refuse to submit to his golden sceptre. He will, therefore, *rule them with a rod of iron*. For though they boast of their liberty, and presume to say *Who is Lord over us*\*? yet in the thing wherein they speak proudly, *he is above them* †. They cannot hide themselves from his notice, nor avoid the intimations of his displeasure.

1. One branch of his iron rule over them, consists in that certain and inseparable connection, which he has established between sin and misery. *The fruit of righteousness is peace* ‡. They who live in the fear of the Lord, and yield a willing obedience to his word, not only possess peace of conscience, and a hope which can look with comfort beyond the grave; but are thereby preserved from innumerable evils, into which they,

\* Ps. xii. 4. † Exod. xviii. 11. ‡ James iii. 18.

who attempt to cast off his yoke, unavoidably plunge themselves. . . On the contrary, *the way of transgressors is hard* \*. It is hard in itself, if we set aside, for a moment, the consideration of the dreadful end to which it leads: . . . Could you see what passes within the breast of a man who disdains to be governed by the rule of God's word, you would see his heart torn to pieces by the clamorous, insatiable demands of the various, violent, inconsistent appetites and passions, which, like so many wild beasts, are continually preying upon him. Not one of them can be fully gratified, much less all, for many of them are diametrically opposite to each other. The boilings of anger, the gnawings of envy, the thirnt of covetousness, the anxieties attendant on pride and ambition, must make the mind, that is subject to them, miserable. *There is no peace to the wicked*; there can be none. Farther, their evil tempers and irregular desires, produce outward and visible effects, which publicly and manifestly prove, that the service of sin is a hard drudgery, and that whatever pleasure it may seem to promise, its pay is misery and

\* Prov. xiii. 15.

pain.

pain. *Who hath woe, contentions, and wounds, without cause* \* ? The drunkard. Lewdness and drunkenness, are high roads, if I may so speak, leading to infamy, disease, penury, and death. Such persons do not live out half the days which their constitutions might have afforded, if they had not sold themselves to do wickedly. Again, look into their houses. Where the Lord does not dwell, peace will not inhabit. How frequently may we observe, in their family connections, discord and enmity between man and wife, unkind parents, disobedient children, tyrannical masters, and treacherous servants? Thus they live, *hateful in themselves, and hating one another* †. If they have what the world accounts prosperity, their hard master, Satan, so works upon their evil dispositions, that they can derive no real comfort from it. Every day, almost every hour, puts some new bitterness into their cup. And in trouble they have no resource; having no access to God, no promise to support them, no relief from him against their anxieties and fears, they either sink down in sullen comfortless despondency, or in a spirit of wild

\* Prov. xxiii. 29.

† Tit. iii. 3.

rebellion, *blaspheme him because of their plagues* \*. In society, they are dreaded and avoided by the sober and serious, and can only associate with such as themselves. There, indeed, they will pretend to be happy; they carouse, and make a noise, and assist each other to banish reflection; yet frequently the drink, or the devil, break their intimacies, and stir them up to quarrels, broils, and mischief. Such is a life of sin. *The Lord rules them with a rod of iron.* They renounce his fear, and he refuses them his blessing. Nothing more is necessary to render them miserable, than to leave them to themselves.

2. *He rules them with a rod of iron,* by his power over conscience. They may boast and laugh, but we know the gall and bitterness of their state, for we, likewise, were in it, until the Lord delivered us. Let them say what they will, we are sure that there are seasons, when, like him whom they serve, *they believe and tremble* †. They cannot always be in company, they cannot always be intoxicated; though this is the very reason why many intoxicate themselves so often, because they cannot bear their own

\* Rev. xvi. 21.

† James ii. 19.

thoughts when sober. They are then a burden and a terror to themselves. They feel the iron rod. How awful are the thoughts which sometimes awaken them, or keep them awake, in the silent hours of the night! What terrors seize them in sickness, or when they are compelled to think of death! What a death warrant do they often receive in their souls, under the preaching of that word of God, which fills his people with joy and peace! Many will not hear it. But why not? They will not, because they dare not. I am persuaded there are more than a few of the brave spirits of the present day, who would willingly change conditions with a dog; and be glad to part with their reason, if they could at the same time get rid of the horrors which haunt their consciences. Is there one such person here? Let me entreat you to stop and consider, before it be too late. There is yet forgiveness with God. Your case, though dangerous, is not desperate, if you do not make it so yourself. I would direct your thoughts to Jesus. Look to him, and implore his mercy. His blood can cleanse from all sin. He is able to save to the uttermost.

It is possible some may affect to contradict the representation I have made, and be ready to say, “ I find nothing of all this. I take  
 “ a pleasure in my way. I have a healthy  
 “ body, money at my command, and I can  
 “ sleep soundly. I feel none of the qualms  
 “ of conscience you speak of; and though  
 “ the saints and good folks care as little for  
 “ me as I do for them, yet I am very well  
 “ and happy with such acquaintance as I  
 “ like best. As to an hereafter, I do not  
 “ think of it; but I am determined to live  
 “ now.” In answer to sentiments of this kind, which I am afraid are too common, I observe,

3. That the amazing hardness and blindness of heart to which some sinners are given up, is another, and the most terrible effect of *that iron rod*, with which the Lord *rules his enemies*. Pharaoh could say as positively as you, *Who is the Lord that I should obey him*\* ? But because being often rebuked, he persisted in his obstinacy, the contest terminated in his destruction. If you are obstinate like him now, I believe you were not always so. You must have laboured hard, you must

\* Exod. ix. 16.

have



have resisted the light of truth, and have stifled many a conviction, before you could arrive to this pitch of obduracy. You have fought against the holy Spirit, and woe unto you, if he be gone, gone for ever, and will strive with you no more. To be thus given up of God to a reprobate mind, is the heaviest judgment that a sinner can be visited with on this side of hell. I am at a loss what to say to a person thus disposed, and I hope there are none such present. But I would warn those, who, though they have sinned with a high hand, are not yet altogether past feeling, lest you fall into such a state of confirmed disobedience and unbelief. *Take heed lest you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin* \*. If under the light of the gospel you can go on in a course of wilful, wanton, deliberate wickedness, you are upon the very edge of the unpardonable sin, of that state from which it is impossible to renew you to repentance. If the bible be, as you vainly wish it may prove, *a cunningly devised fable*, you may trample upon it with impunity, and laugh on securely to the end of life. But if it be true, remember you have been

\* Heb. iii. 13.

this day warned of the consequences of despising it. If you will perish, I am clear of your blood.

II. I proceed to consider the final issue of this unequal contest, between the worms of the earth and their Maker. *He will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.* Such a vessel may be curiously wrought, and appear beautiful to the eye, but it is frail, easily broken, and when once broken to pieces it is irreparable. It is, therefore, a fit emblem of mortal man in his best estate. *We are fearfully and wonderfully made* \*. The texture of the human frame is admirable. The natural capacities of the mind of man, the powers of his understanding, will, and affections, the rapidity of imagination, the comprehension of memory, especially in some instances, are so many proofs, that, considered as a creature of God, he is a noble creature. And though he is debased and degraded by sin, there are traces of his original excellence remaining, sufficient to denominate him, in the words of the poet, *majestic tho' in ruins.* But if you suppose him rich, powerful, wise, in the common sense of the

\* Ps. cxxxix. 14.

words,

words, he is brittle as a potter's vessel; and while possessed of every possible advantage, he is but like the grass or the flower of the field, which in its most flourishing state, falls, in a moment, at the stroke of the scythe, and withers and dies. A fever, a fall, a tile, a grain of sand, or the air that finds its way through a crevice, may be an overmatch for the strongest man, and bring him down hastily to the grave. By a small change in the brain, or some part of the nervous system, he who now prides himself in his intellectual abilities, may soon become a lunatic, or an idiot. Disease may quickly render the beauty loathsome, and the robust weak as infancy. There are earthen or china vessels, which might possibly endure for many ages, if carefully preserved from violence. But the seeds of decay and death are sown in our very frame. We are crushed before the moth, and moulder away untouched, under the weight of time. How surely and inevitably then must they whom the Lord strikes with his iron rod, be shattered with the blow!

Communities and collective bodies of men, are, in his hand, no less frail than individuals.

The

The first-born throughout Egypt, and the vast army of Sennacherib, perished in a night. The Romans were the iron rod in his hand, wherewith he dashed the Jewish nation to pieces. Their fragments are scattered far and wide to this day, and who can gather them up? The Roman empire was likewise dashed to pieces in its turn. And such has been the end successively of many powers, and of many persons who have presumed to oppose his designs. For a while they were permitted to rage, and plot, and strive, but at length they stumbled and fell, and their memory is perished.

But it is proper to bring the consideration nearer home. I have been informed, that the music to which this passage is set, is so well adapted to the idea it expresses, as, in a manner, to startle those who hear it. They who live in sinful habits, regardless of the gospel, would be startled, indeed, if they were duly sensible how directly the words apply to their own situation, and that the Psalmist describes the manner in which God will treat them, if they continue impenitent. If we could see all that passes upon dying beds, we should often see the false peace, and  
vain

vain hopes of sinners, dashed to pieces, when eternity is opening upon their view. We shall certainly see the solemnity of the great day. *For we must all appear, not only as spectators, but as parties nearly interested in the proceedings, before the judgment-seat of Christ. Behold, he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him!* He will descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and before him shall be gathered all nations. Where then shall the sinner and the ungodly appear? What will then become of those who despise, and those who abuse the gospel of the grace of God? The libertine, the infidel, the apostate, the hypocrite, the profane scoffer, and the false professor, how will they stand, or whither will they flee, when the great Judge shall sit upon his awful throne, and the books shall be opened, and every secret thing shall be disclosed? Alas for them that *are full, and that laugh now, for then they shall pine and mourn* \*. Then their cavils will be silenced, their guilt, with all its aggravations, be charged home upon them, and no plea, no

\* Luke vi. 25.

advocate be found. Can their hearts endure, or their hands be strong, when he shall speak to them in his wrath, and say, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?*

But let them who love his name rejoice. You have fled for refuge to the hope set before you. To you his appearance will be delightful, and his voice welcome. You shall not be ashamed. This awful God is your's. He will then own and accept you before assembled worlds, and will say, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. Then the days of your mourning shall be ended, and your sun shall go down no more* \*.

\* Matt. xxv. 34.

Isa. lx. 20.

# S E R M O N XXXVI.

T H E - L O R D R E I G N E T H .

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REV. xix. 6.

*Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent  
reigneth!*

**T**H E book of the Revelation, being chiefly prophetical, will not, perhaps, be fully understood, till the final accomplishment of the events shall draw near, and throw a stronger light upon the whole series. But while the learned commentators have been, hitherto, divided and perplexed in their attempts to illustrate many parts of it, there are other parts well adapted for the instruction and refreshment of plain christians. Particulary those passages in which the scenery  
and

and images seem designed to give us some representation of the happiness and worship of the heavenly state. Thus a plain unlettered believer, when reading with attention the fourth and fifth chapters, though he cannot give a reason why the elders are four and twenty, the living creatures four, and the number of their wings neither more nor less than six; yet, from the whole description of the Lamb upon the throne, the songs of the redeemed, and the chorus of the angels, he receives such an impression of glory, as awakens his gratitude, desire and joy, and excites *him* likewise to take up the same song of praise, *to him who has loved him, and washed him from his sins in his own blood.* He is content to leave the discussion of hard questions to learned men, while he feeds by faith upon those simple truths, which can only be relished by a spiritual taste; and which, where there is such a taste, make their way to the heart, without the assistance of critical disquisition.

The subject of the preceding chapter, is the destruction of mystical Babylon, the head of the opposition against the kingdom of the Lord Christ. But Babylon sinks like a millstone

- stone



stone in the mighty ocean, and is no more found. So must all his enemies perish. The catastrophe of Bayblon, like that of Pharaoh at the Red Sea, is beheld by the saints and servants of the Lord with admiration, and furnishes them with a theme for a song of triumph to his praise. This may be properly styled *sacred music* indeed. It is commanded, inspired and regulated, by the Lord himself. The performers are all interested in the subject, *they who fear God*, and are devoted to his service and glory. And though persons of this character are comparatively few upon earth, hidden, and in a manner lost, among the crowd of mankind; they will be, when brought together at last, a very large company. Their united voices are here compared to the voice of many waters, and of mighty thunders, and this is the solemn close, the chorus of their song, *Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

The impression, which the performance of this passage in the Oratorio, usually makes upon the audience, is well known. But however great the power of music may be, should we even allow the flights of poetry to be truth, *that it can soften rocks, and bend*

*the knotty oak*, one thing we are sure it cannot do. It cannot soften and change the hard heart, it cannot bend the obdurate will of man. If all the people who successively hear *the Messiah*, who are struck and astonished, for the moment, by this chorus in particular, were to bring away with them an abiding sense of the importance of the sentiment it contains, the nation would soon wear a new face. But do the professed lovers of sacred music in this enlightened age, generally live, as if they really believed that *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*? Rather, do not the greater part of them live, as they might do, if they were sure of the contrary? as if they were satisfied to a demonstration, that either there is no God, or that his providence is not concerned in human affairs? I appeal to conscience; I appeal to fact.

I apprehend that this passage, taken in the strictest sense, refers to a period not yet arrived. Babylon is not yet fallen. The servants of God in the present day, will most probably fulfil their appointed time upon earth, like those who have lived before them, in a state of conflict. They must endure the cross, and sustain opposition for his sake.

The

The people who shall live when *the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ*, when the nations shall learn *war no more*, are yet unborn. But even now we may rejoice *that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*, and that *Jesus is King of kings, and Lord of lords*. I must consider my text as referring to him. Many of the heathens believed that God reigned. The christian doctrine is, that the Lord God omnipotent, exerciseth his dominion and government in the person of Christ. *The Father loveth the Son, and hath committed all things into his hands* \*. And thus our Lord, after his resurrection, assured his disciples, *All power is committed unto me in heaven and in earth* †. He has already *taken to himself his great power, and reigneth*. His right of reigning over all, is essential to his divine nature; but the administration of government in the nature of man, is the effect and reward of his obedience unto death. But in the union of both natures; he is one person, Christ Jesus the Lord. All the riches and fulness of the Godhead, all the peculiar honours of

\* John iii. 35.

† Matt. xxviii. 18.

the Mediator, center in him. They may be distinguished, but they are inseparable.

Happy are they who can, upon solid and scriptural grounds, exult in the thought that the Lord reigneth, and can make his government the subject of their hallelujahs and praises! Happy they, who see, acknowledge and admire, his management in the kingdom of providence, and are the willing subjects of his kingdom of grace. Let us take a brief survey of his reigning glory in these kingdoms.

I. Great and marvellous is this Lord God omnipotent in his kingdom of *Universal Providence!* His mighty arm sustains the vast fabric of the universe. He upholds the stars in their courses. If we attentively consider their multitude, their magnitudes, their distances from us and from each other, and the amazing swiftness, variety and regularity of their motions, our minds are overwhelmed, our thoughts confounded, by the vastness and the wonders of the scene. But *He* spoke them into being, and they are preserved in their stations and revolutions by his power and agency. If we fix our thoughts upon the earth, though in comparison of the immensity

ment of his creation, it is but as a point, or a grain of sand, it is the object of his incessant care. All its various inhabitants derive their existence and their support from him. He provides for the young ravens when unable to fly, and for the young lions that traverse the woods. The instinct of animals, whereby they are unerringly instructed, in whatever concerns the welfare and preservation of their species, so vastly exceeding the boasted wisdom of man, that he can neither imitate nor comprehend it, is communicated by him. He teaches the birds to build their nests, the spider to weave his web, and instructs the communities of bees, and insignificant emmets, to form their admirable policies and government among themselves. If we speak of intelligent beings, *He does what he pleases in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.* He directs and overrules the counsels and purposes of men, so that though they act freely, the event of all their different interfering schemes, is only the accomplishment of his purposes. When they are employed as his instruments, from small beginnings, and in defiance of difficulties ap-

parently insuperable, they succeed beyond their own expectations. When unhappily engaged against his designs, in vain they rage and plot. He takes the wife in their own craftiness, pours contempt upon their power and policy, and all their great preparations melt like a mist, or like snow before the sun, and leave no trace behind. Still more wonderful, to the eye of faith, is his controul over Satan and the powers of darkness. Whatever, for wise reasons, though unknown to us, he may permit them to do, they cannot, with all their subtlety or strength, detain one soul in their bondage, longer than till his appointed time of release; nor recover one soul back to their dominion, of which he is pleased to undertake the care. On the contrary, he breaks the heads of these Leviathans in pieces, turns their counsels against themselves, and makes them instrumental in purifying his people, and extending his church, by the means they employ for the destruction of both. Thus they who dwell under his shadow are safe; for all things are in his power, and he always careth for them, and keepeth them, as the pupil of his eye. And therefore though they are exercised

exercised with trials, and suffer many things for their good, his eye being always upon them, and his ear open to their prayer, they are supported, supplied, relieved, delivered, and at last made more than conquerors.

II. He has a peculiar kingdom, which, he has established distinct from the kingdoms of this world, though diffused and extended among them, and which, in due time, like leaven, will pervade and assimilate them all to himself. This is the kingdom of the gospel, his church. It is founded upon a rock, and though the gates of hell continually war against it, they cannot prevail. For he is *a wall of fire round about it, and a glory in the midst of it* \*.

Here he reigns upon *a throne of grace*. He possesses and exercises unlimited authority as a sovereign, to save whom he pleases, to pardon all manner of sins and offences, and to admit rebels and enemies, when they submit themselves and bow to his golden sceptre, into the number of his children and his friends. Seldom do the kings of the earth publish an act of grace in favour of those who have been guilty of rebellion, without

\* Zech. ii. 5.

clogging it with exceptions. Either they feel a resentment against some of the delinquents, which they have not magnanimity sufficient to conquer, or they dare not trust them. But his mercy is infinite. And he knows how to change their hearts when he pardons their sins.

Perhaps it may not be a digression, wholly unuseful and impertinent, if I take this occasion to point out the several senses in which the word *Church* may be understood, agreeable to the scripture.

1. It denotes in the aggregate, the *mystical church*, the whole body of that spiritual kingdom, of which the Redeemer is the living and life-giving head\*. A succession of these has appeared upon earth in every age, from the days of righteous Abel whom Cain slew. And we have reason to believe, that the far greater part of them are yet unborn. They will all be assembled together before the throne, in the great day of his final appearance, and inherit the kingdom of glory prepared for them. This is the *church which God hath bought with his own blood* †. Happy are they who belong to this society of

\* Col. i. 18.

† Acts xx. 28.



the redeemed, *whose names are written in heaven.*

2. *The visible church* contains all those who bear and acknowledge the name of christians, and who admit and enjoy the gospel revelation. The church, in this sense, includes many nations. But it is a small thing to belong only to the visible church, for it is compared to a corn-floor \* on which chaff is mingled with the wheat ; to a field in which tares grow promiscuously with the good seed ; to a fisher's net inclosing a great multitude of fishes both good and bad †. But a time of discrimination will come. The chaff and the tares, and whatever is evil, will be consumed. Alas ! what will it avail at last to say, *Lord, we have eaten and drank in thy presence, at thy table with thy true disciples, and thou hast taught in our streets ‡, and we have heard, in our own language, of thy wonderful works, if you can say no more.* My heart is pained with the apprehension, lest some of you who have joined in the same public worship with true believers, have sat in the same seat, and lived in the same fami-

\* Matt. ii 12. † Matt. xiii. 24, 47. ‡ Luke xiii. 26, 27.

lies, should at last see them, with whom you have been very nearly connected in this world, received into the kingdom of heaven, and you yourselves be shut out.

3. The *catholic church*, in any one period, is that part of the visible church, which is united to the Lord by living faith. It comprizes all who agree in the profession of the fundamental truths of the gospel, and whose conversation is regulated by its precepts, or in the apostle's words, *All who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity* \*. This catholic church, through the policy of Satan, and the deceitfulness of the heart, is too much divided against itself. Prejudice, bigotry, and remaining ignorance greatly prevent that desirable union amongst true christians, which would promote their peace, comfort and increase, and would contribute, more than a thousand arguments, to put their adversaries to shame and to silence. That shameful contention for denominations, parties, and favourite preachers, for which the apostle reproved the Corinthians †, is still greatly to be lamented. But though they are too backward in acknowledging and assisting each

\* Eph. vi. 24.

† 1 Cor. iii. 4.

other, the Lord is merciful to their weakness, and bears with them all. And as they grow in grace, and drink more into his Spirit, their hearts are enlarged, and they approach nearer to his pattern of long-suffering, patience and tendernefs.

4. The word *church* is applied to particular societies of christians, who are connected by a participation in the same ordinances of the gospel, and who maintain a scriptural separation from the sinful spirit and customs of the world. And though there may be pretenders among them, as there were among the apostolic churches, they are denominated by the better part. They belong to the catholic church by their profession of the truth, of course they are a part of the visible church; and those of them who are in deed and in truth what they profess to be, are living members of the mystical church, to which all the promises are made. By whatever name they are known or distinguished among men, they are *branches of the true vine, they have their fruits unto holiness, and their end, everlasting life.* But to return,

In this his church, or spiritual kingdom, he rules by wise and gracious laws and ordinances.

nances. He releases his subjects from all authority, in point of conscience, but his own, and enjoins them to *call no one master, but himself*\*. If they *stand fast in the liberty wherewith he has made them free* †, they will not give themselves up implicitly to the dictates of any man, nor follow him farther than he follows their Lord. And consequently, if they are influenced by his royal law of doing to others, as they would that others should do unto them, they will not attempt to exert an undue authority, or wish to be called *masters* themselves ; so as to assume a dogmatical carriage, or to expect a universal and absolute submission. But it must be owned, that in our present state of infirmity, this privilege is not sufficiently prized, nor this command duly complied with. There being scarcely a man who does not either arrogate too much to himself, or allow too much to others. A fault in the one or the other of these respects, may be assigned as a principal cause of most of the evils which deform the appearance, or injure the peace of the church. But the design of his gospel is to set his people at li-

\* Matt. xxiii. 8—10.

† Gal. v. 1.

berty from the yoke of men, from the fetters of custom and tradition, of superstition and will-worship; that they may enjoy, in his service, a state of perfect freedom.

For it is the principal glory of his kingdom, that he reigns in the hearts of his people. There he writes his precepts, impresses his image, and erects his throne; ruling them, not merely by an outward law, but by an inward secret influence, breathing his own life and spirit into them, so that their obedience becomes, as it were, natural, pleasurable, and its own reward. By the discoveries he affords them of his love, he wins their affections, captivates their wills, and enlightens their understandings. They derive from him the *spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind*\*, and run with alacrity in the way of his commandments.

It is impossible therefore to make this song our own, and cordially to rejoice that *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*, unless we are the willing subjects of his government; unless we are really pleased with his appointed way of salvation, approve of his precepts, and, from a view of his wisdom and good-

\* 2 Tim. i. 7.

ness, can cheerfully submit and resign ourselves to the disposal of his providence. In all these respects we are by nature at variance with him. We are too proud to be indebted to his grace, too wise in our own conceits to desire his instruction, too obstinately attached to the love and practice of sin, to be capable of relishing the beauty and spirituality of his commandments. And our love of the world, and the things of it, is too strong and grasping, to permit us to be satisfied with the lot, and with the dispensations he appoints for us. We wish, if possible, and as far as possible we attempt, to be our own carvers. We are unthankful when he bestows, impatient if he withholds, and if he sees fit to resume the gifts of which we are unworthy, we repine and rebel against his will. This enmity must be subdued, before we can be pleased with his government. In other words, we must be changed, we must be made new creatures. To produce this change, this new creation, the gospel is the only expedient; and when revealed and applied to the heart by the power of the holy Spirit, the miracle is wrought. The sinner who is first convinced of his guilt and misery, and then

recon-

reconciled to God by faith in the great atonement, willingly yields to his administration. He owns and feels the propriety of his proceedings, is ready to acknowledge, in his sharpest afflictions, that the Lord is gracious, and has not dealt with him according to the desert of his iniquities. He considers himself as no longer his own, but bought with a price, and brought under the strongest obligations, *to live no longer to himself, but to him who loved him, and gave himself for him.* And what was before his dread and dislike, becomes now the joy of his heart, the thought, that the Lord reigneth, and that all his concerns are in the hands of him who doeth all things well.

Are there any among us, who say in their hearts, *We will not have this Saviour to rule over us?* The thought is no less vain than wicked. He must, he will *reign, till he has subdued all enemies under his feet.* You must either bend or break before him.

# S E R M O N XXXVII.

THE EXTENT OF MESSIAH'S SPIRITUAL  
KINGDOM.

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REV. xi. 15.

*The kingdoms of this world are become the  
kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ,  
and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

**T**HE kingdom of our Lord in the heart,  
and in the world, is frequently com-  
pared to a building or house, of which he  
himself is both the foundation and the ar-  
chitect \*. A building advances by degrees †,  
and while it is in an unfinished state, a  
stranger cannot, by viewing its present ap-  
pearance, form an accurate judgment of the

\* Isa. xxviii. 16. and liv. 11, 12.    † 1 Cor. iii. 9.  
Eph. ii. 20—22.

design,



design, and what the whole will be, when completed. For a time, the walls are of unequal height, it is disfigured by rubbish, which at the proper season will be taken away; and by scaffolding, which, though useful for carrying on the building, does not properly belong to it, but will likewise be removed when the present temporary service is answered. But the architect himself proceeds according to a determinate plan, and his idea of the whole work is perfect from the beginning. It is thus the Lord views his people in the present life. He has begun a good work in them, but as yet every part of it is imperfect and unfinished; and there are not only defects to be supplied, but deformities and incumbrances that must be removed. Many of the dispensations and exercises, which contribute to form their religious character, do not properly belong to that work which is to abide, though they have a subserviency to promote it. When that which is perfect is come, the rest shall be done away.

And thus, although the growth and extent of his kingdom is the great scope and object of his providence; to which all the revolutions

tions that take place in the kingdoms of this world, shall be finally subservient; yet the steps by which he is carrying forward his design, are, for the most part, remote from the common apprehensions of mankind; and, therefore, seldom engage their attention. His kingdom, founded upon the rock of ages, is building, advancing, and the gates of hell shall not be able to withstand its progress. Only detached and inconsiderable parts of the plan are as yet visible, and the beauties are every where obscured by attendant blemishes. But his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Princes and statesmen seldom think of him, are seldom aware that in prosecuting their own schemes, they are eventually fulfilling his purposes, and preparing the way to promote the cause which they despise, and often endeavour to suppress. But thus it is. Sometimes he employs them, more directly, as his instruments, and when they are thus engaged in his work, their success is secured. So Cyrus, whom Isaiah mentioned by name \*, long before his birth, as the appointed deliverer of Israel from their captivity, prospered in his enter-

\* Isa. xlv. 1—5.

prizes, being guided and girded by him whom he knew not, and established his own power upon the ruins of the Assyrian monarchy. The Roman empire likewise increased and prospered from small beginnings, that a way might be opened, in the proper season, for the destruction of the Jewish æconomy, and for facilitating the preaching of the gospel. And posterity will see, that the principal events of the present age, in Asia and America, have all a tendency to bring forward the accomplishment of my text; and are leading to one grand point, the spreading and establishment of the church and kingdom of our Lord. His plan is unalterably fixed. He has said it, and it shall be done. Things will not always remain in their present disordered state. And though this desirable period may be yet at a distance, and appearances very dark and unpromising, the word of the Lord shall prevail over all discouragements and opposition.

Prophecies, which are not yet fulfilled, will necessarily be obscure. Many learned men have laboured to explain the prophecies in this book, to ascertain the facts which are foretold, and to fix the dates when they may  
be

be expected to take place. But they are so divided in their judgments, and with regard to several of the most eminent, who thus differ, the support their opinions derive from the character and abilities of the proposers is so nearly equal, that those who consult them are more likely to be embarrassed, than satisfied. For myself, I think it becomes me to confess my ignorance, and my inability, either to reconcile the conjectures of others, or to determine which is the more probable, or to propose better of my own. I do not, therefore, undertake to give the precise sense of this passage, as it stands connected with the rest of the chapter. Nor should I, perhaps, have attempted to preach from it, but upon this occasion. It is introduced, with great propriety, in the *Messiah*, as a close to the second part, which begins with a view of the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world, by the power of his priestly office; and concludes with an account of his glorious success as the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

My business is only to lead you to some pleasing and profitable reflections, upon this subject, now it comes in my way. There

are many prophecies in the Old Testament, that speak in magnificent strains of a kingdom, which God would, in his appointed time, establish upon the earth ; the sense of which is greatly weakened and narrowed, if restrained, as some commentators would restrain it, to the restoration of Israel to their own land, from their captivity in Babylon. Yet it must be allowed, that the highly figurative language in which many of these prophecies are expressed, a great part of which cannot be understood literally, renders the interpretation difficult.

What we read in the twentieth chapter of this book, of a period in which the saints shall reign with Christ during a thousand years, has given occasion to almost a thousand conjectures, concerning a millennial state. Some persons suppose, that the present frame of nature shall be dissolved and changed, and expect a proper resurrection of the dead ; after which, the Lord will personally reign with his people upon the earth, when purified by fire, and restored to its primitive perfection and beauty. If so, earth will be heaven ; for the state of happiness believers are taught to hope for, depends

not upon local circumstances, but chiefly consists in the enjoyment of his unveiled immediate presence, and in beholding his glory. Others, seem to conceive of the millennium, nearly in the same manner as the Jews formed their expectations of MESSIAH'S kingdom. They think that temporal honours, dominion, prosperity, and wealth, will then be the portion of believers; the very portion, which they are now called upon to renounce and despise. But, as I have hinted, large allowances must be made, for the metaphorical language of prophecy. We read that the streets of the New Jerusalem are paved with gold, and that the twelve gates are twelve pearls \*; but no person of sound judgment can suppose, that this description is to be understood strictly, according to the letter. The personal presence of MESSIAH with his people, is not necessary to such degrees of happiness, as are compatible with the present state of mortality and imperfection. It is sufficient, if he vouchsafes to dwell with them by his Spirit. Much less are temporal dominion and wealth, necessary, to the prosperity and honour of his spiritual

\* Rev. xxi. 15, 21.

kingdom. But what then are we encouraged to expect, beyond what has been hitherto known, with regard to this point? Let us consult the scriptures, which alone can guide and determine our enquiry. I will select some express passages, a few out of many which might be adduced, but sufficient, I hope, by the rules of sober interpretation, to lead us to a satisfactory answer.

The glory and happiness of MESSIAH'S kingdom, is described by the prophets, in terms, which cannot be justly applied to any period of the church already past. They sometimes represent it by a variety of beautiful pastoral images, and sometimes in plainer language. Thus Isaiah, *And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house, shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go up and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall*

shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more\*. Again, The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the cockatrice-den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea †. I might likewise transcribe the whole of the sixtieth chapter, but shall only offer you the latter part of it. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an

\* Isa. ii. 2—4.

† Ibid. xi. 6—9.



*everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one, shall become a thousand, and a small one, a strong nation, I the Lord will hasten it in his time \*.* To the same purpose the prophet Ezekiel. *And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them, I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the showers to come down in his season, there shall be showers of blessing †.* And again, *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all*

\* Isa. lx. 18—22.

† Ezek. xxxiv. 23—26.

*your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them \*. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden, and the waste, and desolate, and ruined cities, are become fenced and inhabited †. The prophet Zechariah speaks to the same effect. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name One ‡.*

Though the promises and prophecies of this import, are addressed to the church,

\* Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. † Ver. 34, 35. ‡ Zech. ii. 10, 11. and xiv. 9.

under the names of Israel, Jacob, Zion, or Jerufalem, we are certain they were not fulfilled to the nation of Israel, while their civil government subsisted. Their national prosperity and glory were greatly diminished, before any of these prophecies were revealed. They were an inconstant and a suffering people, during the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel, till at length their city and temple were destroyed by the Chaldeans. And though they returned from their captivity, and their city and temple were rebuilt, they continued tributary and dependent, and were successively subject to the Persian, Macedonian, and Roman power. Their obstinate rejection and crucifixion of MESSIAH, filled up the measure of their iniquities, and brought wrath upon them to the uttermost. They were soon afterwards exterminated from their land, their constitution, both of church and state, utterly subverted; and they remain, to this day, in a dispersed state, which renders the observance of their law impracticable.

It seems equally plain, that these prophecies have not yet been fulfilled to the Christian church. The greater part of the earth, to  
this

this day, is unacquainted with the name of Jesus. And the general face of Christendom, whether in Popish or in Protestant countries, exhibits little more of the spirit and character of the gospel, than is to be found among the Heathens. If Christianity be compatible with pride or baseness, with avarice or profusion, with malice and envy, with scepticism in principle, and licentiousness of conduct, then Christians abound: but if humility, integrity, benevolence, and a spiritual mind, are essential to a Christian; if we judge by the criterion which our Lord himself appointed, and account only those his disciples, who live in the exercise of mutual love, it is to be feared that they are but few, even in the places which are most favoured with the light of the gospel. But can the scriptures be broken? Can the promises of the Lord fail? By no means. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle* of his word shall fail of accomplishment.

It is not necessary to suppose that every individual of mankind, shall be savingly converted to the Lord, in this future day of his power; but I apprehend the current language of the prophecies, warrant us to  
hope,

hope, that the prayers and desires of the church, shall, in some future period, be signally answered, in the following respects.

1. That the gospel shall visit the nations which are at present involved in darkness. The Heathen are given to MESSIAH for *his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.* At present (as I have formerly observed)\* if the whole of Christendom was inhabited by real Christians, they would bear but a small proportion to the rest of mankind. Large countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa, where the gospel was once known, have been, for many ages, involved in Mohammedan darkness. The scattered remnants of the Greek church in Turkey, are so miserably depraved and ignorant, that they scarcely deserve to be mentioned as an exception. The rest of Asia knows little of Christianity; unless they have learnt it, in the eastern parts, from the cruelty and tyranny of men who bear the name of Christians. The like may be said of America, excepting the northern provinces of our late dominion there. For the zeal of the Spaniards and Portuguese has produced few other effects, than rapine, slavery, and deluges

\* Page 109.

of human blood. The interior parts, both of Africa and America, are unknown. The countries and islands, lately discovered in the Southern Hemisphere, are left, as they were found, in gross ignorance. The exertions of our navigators to supply them with sheep and cows, and useful implements, from Europe, were humane and laudable. But it does not appear that the least attempt was made, to impart to them the knowledge of our holy religion. The only missionary they have from us, (if he be yet living) is, the much spoken of, Omiah. This man was brought to England, almost from the Antipodes; he spent some time amongst us, and was then sent back to tell his countrymen what he had seen and heard. But, if he gave a faithful account of our customs, morals, and religion, so far as they fell within the circle of his own observations, the relation would certainly be little to our honour, and, I am afraid, much to their hurt. In brief, a large part of Europe, almost the whole of the other three continents, with the islands in the Eastern and Southern Oceans, are destitute of the true gospel. But there is a time approaching, called the fulness of the Gentiles,

tiles,

tiles, when the Redeemer's glory shall dawn and shine upon all nations. And though we cannot see when, or how, this happy change shall be effected, yet, in the Lord's hour, mountains shall sink into plains. Nor is it more improbable to us now, than it would have seemed to an inhabitant of Rome, in the time of Julius Cæsar, that the island of Great-Britain, should one day be distinguished, by all those privileges, which the providence of God has since bestowed upon it.

2. That this gospel shall prevail, *not in word only, but in power*. Even where the name of Christ is professed, but little of the power of it is, at present, known. The superstition and false worship, generally prevalent, within the pale of the Roman and Greek churches, may be mentioned without offence to Protestants. But the bulk of the Protestant countries are equally overspread with scepticism and wickedness. Few comparatively, among Protestants, are friendly to that gospel which the apostles preached; and much fewer are they, who are influenced by it. Perhaps, no nation is favoured with greater advantages for knowing the truth, than our nation, nor any city, more favoured than

than this city. I doubt not, but there are persons now living, who would have been thought eminent Christians, if they had lived in the first and happiest age of the church. And I trust their number is greater than we are aware of. The Lord has a hidden people, little known to the world, or to each other. But if we judge by the standard of truth, we must acknowledge, that the power of religious profession is very low. How little does it appear in the lives, tempers and pursuits, of the most who hear the gospel? But the time will come, when Christians shall again be known by their integrity, spiritual mindedness, and benevolence, and by all the fruits of righteousness, which are, by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. The fall of mystical Babylon, and of Antichrist, in its various forms, and the calling of the Jews, are events, which are positively foretold; and which, when they come to pass, will have great effects. Zion, as yet, is only building, but it shall be built.

3. That the animosities and disputes which prevail among Christians shall cease. The observation of a late ingenious writer, which, it is to be feared, he was confirmed in, by  
his



his own experience, is too much founded in truth.—“ We have just religion enough to “ make us hate one another.” The spirit of party, prejudice, bigotry, and interest, a zeal for systems, forms, modes, and denominations, furnish men with plausible pretences for indulging their un sanctified passions; and deceive them into an opinion, that while they are gratifying their pride and self-will, they are only labouring to promote the cause of God and truth. Hence, often, the feuds which obtain among religious people, are pursued with greater violence, and to greater lengths, and are productive of more mischievous consequences, than the quarrels of drunkards. The lovers of peace, who refuse to take a part in these contentions, but rather weep over them in secret, are censured and despised as neutrals and cowards, by the angry combatants on all sides, while the world despises and laughs at them all. It was not so in the beginning, nor will it be so always. The hour is coming, when believers shall be united in love; shall agree in all that is essential to a life of faith and holiness, and shall live in the exercise of forbearance and tenderness towards each other,

other, if, in some points of smaller importance, they cannot think exactly alike; which possibly may be the case in the best times, in the present imperfect state of human nature. *Ephraim then shall no more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim* \*.

4. That it will be a time of general peace. At present, the kingdoms, which, by their profession, should be subjects of the Prince of Peace, are perpetually disturbing, invading, and destroying each other. They live in habits of mutual fear and jealousy, and maintain great armies on all sides; that each nation may be prepared, if occasion offers, to strike the first blow. War is followed as a trade, and cultivated as a science; and they who, with the greatest diligence and success, spread devastation and ruin far and wide, and deluge the earth with human blood, acquire the title of heroes and conquerors. Can there be a stronger confirmation, of what we read in scripture, concerning the depravity of man? Can we conceive an employment more suited to gratify the malignity of satan and the powers of darkness, if they were permitted to appear and act amongst

\* Isa. xi. 13.

us in human shapes? Could such enormities possibly obtain, if the mild and merciful spirit of the gospel generally prevailed? But it shall prevail at last, and then *the nations shall learn war no more* \*.

How transporting the thought! That a time shall yet arrive, when the love of God and man, of truth and righteousness, shall obtain through the earth. The evils (and these are the greatest evils of human life) which men bring upon themselves, and upon each other, by their wickedness, shall cease; and we may believe that the evils in the natural world will be greatly abated. Sin will no longer call down the tokens of God's displeasure, by such public calamities as hurricanes, earthquakes, pestilence, and famine. And if some natural evils, as pain and sickness, should remain, submission to the will of God, and the compassion and tenderness of men towards the afflicted, will render them tolerable.

If this prospect be desirable to us, surely it will be the object of our prayers. The Lord will do great things, but he will be enquired of by his people for the performance.

\* Isa. ii. 4.

But

But to many persons, the extension of dominion and commerce, appears much more desirable. The glory and extent of the British government has been eagerly pursued; and the late diminution of our national grandeur and influence, has been much laid to heart; while the glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the conversion of the Heathens, are considered by the *Politicians* and *Merchants* of the earth, as trivial concerns, unworthy of their notice, or rather, as obstacles to the views of ambition and avarice. But it is said of MESSIAH, and of his church, *The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish* \*. The word of God may be slighted, but it cannot be annulled. And it is more a subject for lamentation than wonder, that our national prosperity should decline; when we are indifferent, yea, adverse, to that cause, which the great Governor of the world has engaged to promote and establish.

\* Na. ix. 12.

# S E R M O N    X X X V I I I .

KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

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REV. xix. 16.

*[And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh,  
a name written] KING OF KINGS, AND  
LORD OF LORDS.*

us in human shapes? Could such enormities possibly obtain, if the mild and merciful spirit of the gospel generally prevailed? But it shall prevail at last, and then *the nations shall learn war no more* \*.

How transporting the thought! That a time shall yet arrive, when the love of God and man, of truth and righteousness, shall obtain through the earth. The evils (and these are the greatest evils of human life) which men bring upon themselves, and upon each other, by their wickedness, shall cease; and we may believe that the evils in the natural world will be greatly abated. Sin will no longer call down the tokens of God's displeasure, by such public calamities as hurricanes, earthquakes, pestilence, and famine. And if some natural evils, as pain and sickness, should remain, submission to the will of God, and the compassion and tenderness of men towards the afflicted, will render them tolerable.

If this prospect be desirable to us, surely it will be the object of our prayers. The Lord will do great things, but he will be enquired of by his people for the performance.

\* Isa. ii. 4.

But

But to many persons, the extension of dominion and commerce, appears much more desirable. The glory and extent of the British government has been eagerly pursued; and the late diminution of our national grandeur and influence, has been much laid to heart; while the glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the conversion of the Heathens, are considered by the *Politicians* and *Merchants* of the earth, as trivial concerns, unworthy of their notice, or rather, as obstacles to the views of ambition and avarice. But it is said of MESSIAH, and of his church, *The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish* \*. The word of God may be slighted, but it cannot be annulled. And it is more a subject for lamentation than wonder, that our national prosperity should decline; when we are indifferent, yea, adverse, to that cause, which the great Governor of the world has engaged to promote and establish.

\* Ma. ix. 12.

# S E R M O N    X X X V I I I .

KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

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RÈV. xix. 16.

[*And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh,  
a name written*] KING OF KINGS, AND  
LORD OF LORDS.

**T**H E description of the administration and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, in defiance of all opposition, concludes the second part of *the Messiah*. Three different passages from this book are selected to form a grand chorus, of which his title in this verse is the close. A title, which has been sometimes vainly usurped, by proud worms of the earth. Eastern monarchs, in particular, have affected to style themselves King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. In the scriptu-



ral language, men, whether high or low, rich or poor, one with another, are compared to worms and potsherds of the earth; but they are by nature so strongly infected by pride, that they cannot invent titles of honour answerable to the idea they have of their own importance, without intrenching upon the divine prerogative. Thus sovereignty, majesty, holiness and grace, and other attributes which properly belong to God alone, are parcelled out among the *Great*. But let the *great* and the *mighty* know, that wherein they speak proudly, MESSIAH is above them. The whole verse (of which the latter clause only is in the Oratorio) offers two points to our meditations.

I. How he is represented *as wearing his title*. It is written, or inscribed, upon his vesture dipped in blood, and upon his thigh. Either upon that part of his vesture which covers his thigh; or, upon the upper part of his vesture, and upon his thigh likewise.

II. The title itself. *King of kings, and Lord of lords*. Whatever power the kings and lords among mankind possess, is derived from him, and absolutely subject to his controul.

I. The

I. The manner in which he wears his name or title. It is written upon his vesture, and upon his thigh.

I. This name being written upon his *vest-  
ture*, denotes the manifestation, and the ground of his authority. It is written upon his outward garment, to be read, known, and acknowledged, by all beholders. And it is upon his bloody garment, upon the vesture stained with his own blood, and the blood of his enemies; which intimates to us, that his government is founded upon the success of his great undertaking. In the passage from whence this verse is selected, there are three names attributed to MESSIAH. He has *a name which no one knows but himself* \*, agreeable to what he declared when upon earth. No man, *ουδεις*, no one, (neither man nor angel) knoweth the Son, but the Father; this refers to his eternal power and Godhead. A second name, *The Word of God* †, denotes the mystery of the divine personality. The name in my text imports his glory, as the Mediator between God and man, in our nature, which, when he resumed it from the grave, became the seat of

\* Ver. 12.

† Ver. 13.

all power and authority ; which power, we are now taught to consider, not merely as the power of God, to whom it essentially belongs, but as the power of God exercised in, and by that Man, who died upon the cross for our sins. In consequence of his obedience unto death, he received *a name which is above every name* \*. This inscription his own people read, by the eye of faith, in the present life, and it inspires them with confidence and joy, under the many tribulations they pass through, in the course of their profession. Hereafter, it shall be openly known and read by all men. Every eye shall see it, and every heart must either bow or break before him.

2. It is written upon his *thigh*. The thigh is the emblem of power, and is the part of the body on which the sword is girded †. By this emblem we are taught, that he will assuredly maintain and exercise the right which he has acquired. As he has a just claim to the title, he will act accordingly. Many titles among men are *merely* titular. So the king of Great-Britain is styled likewise king of France, though he has

\* Phil. ii. 9.

† Ps. xlv. 3.

neither

neither authority nor possessions in that kingdom. But this name, which MESSIAH bears, is full of life, truth and influence. He is styled *King of kings, and Lord of lords*, because he really is so: Because he actually rules and reigns over them, and does according to his own pleasure *in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth*, with an absolute and uncontrollable sway, so that none can stay his hand, or say unto him, *what doest thou* \* ?

II. The title itself is *King of kings, and Lord of lords*. He is the *Prince of the kings of the earth* †. Too many of them imagine a vain thing. They take counsel together, and set themselves against him ‡, saying, *Let us break his bands asunder*. But *he sitteth in the heavens, and has them in derision*. He has his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their lips, and the result of all their contrivances, is neither more nor less than the accomplishment of his will.

I. The rage they discover, and the resistance they make, cannot weaken this truth, but rather render it more evident. If it be asked, *Why does he permit them to resist?*

\* Dan. iv. 35.      † Rev. i. 5.      ‡ Ps. ii. 3.

we may give an answer, in point, from the case of Pharaoh. He resisted, and he perished. He was often warned and rebuked, but he still hardened his neck, and continued stubborn under repeated judgments, till at length he was destroyed without remedy. Thus the God of Israel was more magnified, and the people of Israel were more honoured, in the view of the surrounding nations, when they were brought from Egypt with a high hand and with a stretched out arm; and when Pharaoh and his armies were overthrown in the Red Sea, than the nature of the case would have admitted, if Pharaoh had made no opposition to their departure. Yet the obstinacy of Pharaoh was properly his own. It is true, we are assured that God hardened his heart; but we are not thereby warranted to suppose, that God is the author of the sin, which he hates and forbids. It is written again, that *God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*\*, and the scripture is to be interpreted consistently with itself. It would be absurd to ascribe darkness, or ice, to the agency of the sun; though both inevitably follow, if the light

\* James i. 13.

and

and heat of the sun be withdrawn to a certain degree. A degree of heat is necessary to keep water in that state of fluidity which we commonly suppose essential to its nature; but it is rather essential to the nature of water, to harden into ice, if it be deprived of the heat which is necessary to preserve it in a fluid state; and the hardest metals will melt and flow like water, if heat be proportionably increased. Thus it is with the heart of fallen man. In whatever degree it is soft and impressible, capable of feeling and tenderness, we must attribute it to the secret influence of the Father and Fountain of light; and if he is pleased to withdraw his influence, nothing more is needful to its complete induration.

2. The kings of the earth are continually disturbing the world with their schemes of ambition. They expect to carry every thing before them, and have seldom any higher end in view, than the gratification of their own passions. But in all they do, they are but servants of this great King and Lord, and fulfil his purposes, as the instruments he employs to inflict prescribed punishment upon transgressors against him, or to open a  
way

way for the spread of his gospel. Thus under the Old Testament dispensation (for he was King from everlasting) the successes of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar, and the exaltation of Cyrus, were entirely owing to their being employed by him, as an ax, or a saw, in the hand of the workman\*. And they acted under a limited commission, beyond which they could not go. They had one thing in view, He had another; and when *his* design was accomplished, we hear of *them* no more. Time would not suffice, were I to adduce the many striking instances of the like kind, which offer to observation from the perusal of modern history. It is well known, with respect to that great event, the reformation from popery in the sixteenth century, and especially in our own land, that many of the principal persons who contributed to its establishment, hated it in their hearts. But their ambition, appetites, and worldly policy, engaged them in such measures, as the King of kings overruled to produce consequences which they neither intended, nor could foresee; and which, when they did apprehend, they would have pre-

\* Isa. x. 15.

vented if they could, but it was too late. Future writers, I doubt not, will make the like reflection on the late American war: in the origin and progress of which, there was such an evident disproportion between the apparent causes, and the effects produced by them; between the first designs and expectations of the principal actors on both sides, and the final event; that I think they who do not perceive a superintending providence conducting the whole affair, as a preparation to still greater and more important revolutions, must be quite at a loss to account for what has already happened, upon any principles of human policy or foresight.

3. That he is King of kings, and Governor among the nations, is farther evident from the preservation of his people; for the world is against them, and they have no protector but him. The wrath of man, like the waves of the sea, has bounds prescribed to it, which it cannot pass. So far as he is pleased to overrule it, to his own praise, he will permit it to operate; but the remainder, that is not subservient to the accomplishment of his purpose, he will restrain\*. But he works

\* Ps. lxxvi. 10.



fo secretly, though powerfully, by the agency of fecond caufes, that only they, who are enlightened by his word and Spirit, can perceive his interference. He permitted Ahithophel to give that counfel to Abfalom, which though wicked, was, in the political fenfe of the word, prudent; that is, it was the probable method of putting David into the power of his rebellious fon. David had prayed that the Lord would *turn Ahithophel's counfel into foolifhnefs* \*. Had the Lord inftantly deprived Ahithophel of his reafon, this prayer would have been more vifibly, but not more effectually answered, than by the counter advice of Hufhai, which, though rash and extravagant, being fuited to gratify the vanity and folly of Abfalom †, rendered the other abortive. Sometimes the enemies of his church divide and wrangle among themfelves, and then one party, to mortify and oppofe the other, will protect thofe whom, otherwife, they wifh to deftroy. Thus Paul efaped from the malice of the Jewish council, by the fudden difagreement which arofe between the Pharifees and Sadducees ‡, though they came together equally determin-

\* 2 Sam. xv. 31. † 2 Sam. xvii. 14. ‡ Act xxiii. 7.

ed to destroy him. At other times, kings and statesmen act so inconsistently with their professed aims, and take steps, so directly calculated, to prevent what they wish to obtain, or to bring upon themselves what they mean to avoid, that we can only say, they are infatuated. A very small compliance, seemed likely to have secured the affection of the twelve tribes to Rehoboam. We are ready to wonder that he could not be prevailed on to speak mildly to the people, for one day, with a view of engaging them to be his servants for ever. But when we read that the cause was from the Lord \*, and that, in this way, his purpose of separating the kingdoms of Israel and Judah was effected, the wonder ceases. Very observable, likewise, was the coincidence of circumstances which preserved the Jews in Persia from the destructive designs of their adversary Haman. If the king † had slept that night, as usual, or if his attendants had read to him in any book but the Chronicle of the empire, or in any part of that Chronicle but the very passage in which the service of Mordecai had been recorded; humanly speaking, Haman would

\* 1 Kings xii. 15.

† Esther vi. 1.

have carried his point. In this manner, by a concurrence of circumstances, each of them, if considered singly, apparently trivial, and all of them, contingent, with respect to any human foresight or prevention, the Lord often pours contempt upon the wise and the mighty, and defeats their deepest laid and best concerted schemes, in the moment when they promise themselves success.

Many salutary and comfortable inferences may be drawn from the consideration of this subject. Some of them I may perhaps have formerly mentioned, but they will well bear a repetition. We have need to be reminded of what we already know.

1. It should inspire us with *confidence*. If the Lord of hosts, the Lord of lords be for us, what weapon or counsel can prosper against us? However dark and threatening appearances may be, we need not tremble for the ark of God. The concernments of his church are in safe hands. The cause so dear to us, is still more dear to him. He has power to support it, when it is opposed, and grace to revive it, when it is drooping. It has often been brought low, but never has been, never shall be forsaken. When he  
will

will work none can hinder. Nor need you fear for yourself, if you have committed yourself, and your all to him. *The very hairs of your head are numbered\**. There is a hedge of protection † around you, which none can break through without his permission; nor will he permit you to be touched, except when he designs to make a temporary and seeming evil, conducive to your real and permanent advantage.

2. It should affect us with an admiring and thankful sense of *his condescension*. *Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest be so mindful of him? He humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven ‡*. But he stoops still lower. He affords his attention and favour to sinful men. His eye is always upon his people, his ear open to their prayers. Not a sigh or falling tear escapes his notice. He pities them, as a father pities his children; he proportions their trials to their strength, or their strength to their trials, and so adjusts his dispensations to their state, that they never suffer, unnecessarily, nor in vain.

3. *How great is the dignity and privilege of true believers*. Is the man, congratulated or envied, whom the king delighteth to ho-

\* Mat. x. 30. † Job i. 10. ‡ Ps. cxiii. 6.

nour? Believers are more frequently despised, than envied, in this world. But they may congratulate one another. The King of kings is their friend. They have honours and pleasures which the world knows nothing of. Their titles are high, they are the *sons and the daughters of the Lord almighty* \*. Their possessions are great, for *all things are theirs* †. They are assured, of what is best for them in this life, and of life eternal hereafter. They are now nearly related to the King of kings, and shall ere long be acknowledged and owned by him, before assembled worlds. They who now account the proud happy, will be astonished and confounded when they shall see the righteous, whom they once undervalued, *shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of God*.

4. We may lastly infer the extreme folly and danger, of those, who persist in their rebellion and opposition against this King of kings, and Lord of lords. Though he exercises much patience and long-suffering towards them for a season, the hour is approaching, when his wrath will burn like ~~fire~~.

\* 2 Cor. vi. 18.

† 1 Cor. iii. 21.

*the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God* \*. Oh the solemnities of that great day, when the frame of nature shall be dissolved, when the Judge shall appear, the books be opened, and all mankind shall be summoned to his tribunal! Will not you yet tremble and bow before him, ye careless ones, while he is seated upon a throne of grace, and while the door of mercy stands open? Once more I call, I warn, I charge you, to repent and believe the gospel. If to day you will hear his voice, it is not yet too late. But who can answer for to-morrow? Perhaps, *this night your soul may be required of you* †. Are you prepared for the summons? If not, seize the present opportunity. Attend to the *one thing needful*. Seek his face that your soul may live. If not, remember that you are warned, your blood will be upon your own head. We have delivered our message, and if you finally reject it, you must answer for yourselves, to him whose message it is.

\* Ps. ix. 17.

† Luke xii. 20.

P A R T III.

S E R M O N XXXIX.

JOB'S FAITH AND EXPECTATION.

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JOB xix. 25, 26.

*I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.*

**C**HRISTIANITY, that is, the religion, of which, MESSIAH, is the author and object, the foundation, life and glory; though not altogether as old as the creation, is nearly so. It is coeval with the first promise and intimation of mercy given to fallen man. When Adam by transgression had violated the order and law of his creation, his

religion, that is, the right disposition of his heart towards God, was at an end. Sin deprived him, at once, of faith and hope, of love and joy. He no longer desired, he no longer could bear, the presence of his offended Maker. He vainly sought to avoid it, and when compelled to answer, though he could not deny his guilt, instead of making an ingenuous confession, he attempted to fix the blame upon the woman, or rather indeed upon the Lord himself, who had provided her for him. But mercy, undeserved and undesired, relieved him from a state, in which he was already become obdurate and desperate. A promise was given him of *the seed of the woman* \*, which virtually contained, as the seed contains the future plant, the substance of all the subsequent promises, which, were fulfilled by the incarnation of the Son of God, and by all that he did, or suffered, or obtained for sinners, in the character of Mediator. For a sinner can have no comfortable intercourse with the holy God, but through a Mediator. Therefore, the apostle observes of the patriarchs and servants of God, under the Old Testament,

\* Gen. iii. 15.

*These*



*These all died in faith* \*. We can say nothing higher than this, of the apostles and martyrs under the New Testament. They died, not trusting in themselves that they were righteous, not rejoicing in the works of their own hands, but they died, like the thief upon the cross, in faith, resting all their hope upon him, who, by his obedience unto death, *is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth* †. We have greater advantages, in point of light and liberty, than those of old. The prophecies concerning MESSIAH, which, at the time of delivery, were obscure, are, to us, infallibly interpreted by their accomplishment. And we know that the great atonement, typically pointed out by their sacrifices, has been actually made; that the Lamb of God has, by the offering of himself, put away sin. But as to the ground and substance, their faith and hope, were the same with ours. *Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ* ‡; and aged Jacob soon after he had said, *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord*, died, with the same composure and willingness, as Simeon did, who saw it with his own eyes. Job,

\* Heb. xi. 13. † Rom. x. 4. ‡ John viii. 56.

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\* Heb. xi. 13. † Rom. x. 4. ‡ John viii. 56.

who was, perhaps, contemporary with Jacob, who at least, is, with great probability, thought to have lived before Moses, gives us, in this passage, a strong and clear testimony of *his* faith. And it forms a beautiful and well chosen introduction to the third part of the *Messiah*, the principal subject of which is, the present privileges and future prospects, of those who believe in the Saviour's name.

The learned are far from being agreed, either in the translation, or in the explanation, of this text. The words *worms* and *body*, being printed, in Italics, in our version, will apprise the attentive English reader, that there are no words, answerable to them, in the Hebrew. If you omit these words, something will be evidently wanting to make a complete sense. This want different writers have supplied, according to their different judgments, and from hence, chiefly, has arisen, the variety of versions and interpretations. But it would be very improper for me, in this place, to take up your time, and to draw off your attention from the great concerns which should fill our minds, when we meet in the house of God, by giving you a detail of controversies and criticisms, which,  
after

after all, are much more uncertain than important. We need not dispute, whether Job, in this passage, professes his assurance of the incarnation of MESSIAH, or of his resurrection, or of his final appearance to judge the world; or whether he is only declaring his own personal faith and hope in him. These several senses are not so discordant, that if we determine for one, we must exclude the rest. I shall content myself with the words as I find them. And I hope, that if we should miss some of the precise ideas, which Job might have when he spoke, we shall not greatly mistake his general meaning, nor wander far wide from the scope of the text.

Four things are observable,

I. The title of *Redeemer*.

II. The appropriating word, *My*.

III. His standing upon *the earth*.

IV. Job's expectation of seeing him *in his flesh*.

I. The title. There is no name of MESSIAH more significant, comprehensive, or endearing, than the name REDEEMER. The name of *Saviour* expresses what he does for sinners. He saves them from guilt and wrath, from sin, from the present evil world,

from the powers of darkness, and from all their enemies. He saves them with an everlasting salvation. But the word *Redeemer*, intimates, likewise, the manner in which he saves them. For it is not merely by the word of his *power*, as he saved his disciples when in jeopardy upon the lake, by saying to the winds and the seas, *Peace, be still: and there was a great calm* \*; but by *price*, by paying a ransom for them, and pouring out the blood of his heart, as an atonement for their sins. The Hebrew word for Redeemer, *Goel*, primarily signifies, a near kinsman, or the next of kin. He with whom the right of redemption lay †; and who, by virtue of his nearness of relation, was the legal avenger of blood. Thus MESSIAH took upon him our nature, and by assuming our flesh and blood, became nearly related to us, that he might redeem our forfeited inheritance, restore us to liberty, and avenge our cause against Satan, the enemy, and murderer of our souls. But thus he made himself also responsible for us, to pay our debts, and to answer the demands of the justice and law of

\* Mark iv. 39.  
iv. 1—3.

† Numb. xxxv. 19, 21. Ruth

God, on our behalf. He fulfilled his engagement. He suffered, and he died on this account. But our Redeemer *who was once dead, is now alive, and liveth for evermore, and has the keys of death, and of hades* \*. This is he of whom Job saith, *I know that he liveth* (was then living) though he was not *to stand upon the earth, until the latter day*. He is the living One, having life in himself, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever* †. Such was his own language to the Jews, *Before Abraham was, I am* ‡. Therefore, the Redeemer is mighty, and his redemption is sure. He is *able* to save to the uttermost. His power is unlimited, and his official authority, as Mediator, is founded in a covenant, ratified by his own blood, and by the oath of the unchangeable God ||.

II. But Job uses the language of appropriation. He says, *My Redeemer*. And all that we know, or hear or speak of him, will avail us but little, unless we are really and personally interested in him, as *Our Redeemer*. A cold speculative knowledge of the gospel, such as a lawyer has of a will, or a deed, which he reads, with no farther de-

\* Rev. i. 18.      † Heb. xiii. 8.      ‡ John viii. 58.  
 || Pf. cx. 4.



sign, than to understand the tenor and import of the writing, will neither save, nor comfort the soul. The believer reads it, as the will is read by the heir, who finds his own name in it, and is warranted by it, to call the estate, and all the particulars specified, *his own*. He appropriates the privileges to himself, and says, The promises are mine, the pardon, the peace, the heaven, of which I read, are all mine. This is the will and testament of the Redeemer, of my Redeemer. The great Testator remembered me in his will, which is confirmed, and rendered valid by his death \*, and therefore, I humbly claim, and assuredly expect, the benefit of all that he has bequeathed. But how shall we obtain this comfortable persuasion, and preserve it against all the cavils of our enemies, who will endeavour to litigate our right? I seem to have before me a proper occasion of discussing a point, very important, and by too many misunderstood; I mean, the nature of that assurance of hope, which the scripture speaks of as attainable, which has been happily experienced by many believers, and which all are exhorted and encouraged to

\* Heb. ix. 16.

seek after, in the methods of God's appointment. But my plan will only permit me to offer a few brief hints upon the subject.

1. Many respectable writers and preachers, have considered this assurance, as essential to true faith. But we have the scripture in our hands, and are not bound to abide by the decisions of any man, farther than as they agree with this standard. The most eminent properties, or effects ascribed to faith, are, *that it works by love\**, *purifies the heart †*, and *overcomes the world ‡*. I think it cannot easily be denied, by those who are competent judges in the case, that there are persons to be found, who give these evidences that they are believers, and yet are far from the possession of an abiding assurance. They hope they love the Lord, but, there is such a disproportion, between the sensible exercise of their love, and the conviction they have of their obligations to him, that they are often afraid they do not love him *supremely*; and if not, they know, that in the scriptural sense, they do not love him at all. They can say from their hearts, that they desire to love him, but they dare not go farther. But

\* Gal. v. 6.      † Acts xv. 9.      ‡ 1 John v. 4.

there

there is a weak, and a strong, faith; they differ, not in kind, but only in degree. Faith is compared to *a grain of mustard seed*\*, which, under the cultivation of the heavenly husbandman, who first sows the seed in the heart, grows up to assurance. But in its infant, and weak state, it is true, and acceptable faith. Far from *breaking the bruised reed*†, he will strengthen it. *He will not quench the smoking flax*, but will, in due time, fan it into a flame.

2. I will go a step farther. Were I to define the assurance we are speaking of, I should perhaps say, *It is, in our present state, the combined effect, of faith and ignorance.* That assurance which does not spring from true faith in the Son of God, wrought by the operation of the holy Spirit, is no better than presumption. But I believe, what we call *assurance*, even when it is right, is not entirely owing to the strength of our faith, but in a great measure, to our having such faint and slight views, of some truths, which, if we had a more powerful impression of them, unless our faith was likewise proportionably strengthened at the same time, might

\* Mat. xvii. 20.

† Isa. xlii. 3.

possibly make the strongest assurance totter and tremble. I will explain myself. Admitting that I had a right to tell you, that I am so far assured of my interest in the gospel salvation, as to have no perplexing doubt either of my acceptance, or of my perseverance; you would much overrate me, if you should suppose this was a proof that my faith is very strong. Alas! I have but a very slight perception of the evil of sin, of the deceitfulness of my own heart, of the force and subtlety of my spiritual enemies, of the strictness and spirituality of the holy law, or of the awful majesty and holiness, of the great God, with whom I have to do. If in the moment, while I am speaking to you, he should be pleased to impress these solemn realities upon my mind, with a conviction and evidence, tenfold greater than I have ever known hitherto (which I conceive would still be vastly short of the truth) unless my faith was also strengthened, by a tenfold clearer and more powerful discovery, of the grace and glory of the Saviour, you would probably see my countenance change and my speech falter. The Lord, in compassion to our weakness, shews us these things, by little  
and

and little, as we are able to bear them; and if, as we advance in the knowledge of ourselves, and of our dangers, our knowledge of the unfearchable riches of Christ, advances equally, we may rejoice in hope, we may even possess an assured hope. But let not him who hath put on his harness, boast as though he had put it off\*. We are yet in an enemy's land, and know not what changes we may meet with, before our warfare is finished.

3. How far our assurance is solid may be estimated by the effects. It will surely make us humble, spiritual, peaceful and patient. I pity those who talk confidently of their hope, as if they were out of the reach of doubts and fears, while their tempers are un sanctified, and their hearts are visibly attached to the love of the present world. I fear they know but little of what they say. I am better pleased when persons, of this character, complain of doubts and darkness. It proves at least that they are not destitute of feeling, nor, as yet, lulled into a spirit of careless security. And there are professors, whom, instead of endeavouring to comfort in

\* 1 Kings xx. 11.

their

their present state, I would rather wish to make still more suspicious of themselves, than they are ; till they are convinced of the impossibility of enjoying true peace; while their hearts are divided between God and the world. For though sanctification is not the ground of a good hope, it is the certain concomitant of it. If it be true, *that without holiness no man shall see the Lord* \*, it must likewise be true, that without holiness no man can have a scriptural, and well-founded hope, of seeing him.

4. But to give a direct answer to the enquiry, How shall I know that he is my Redeemer ? I may use the prophet's words, *Then shall ye know, if you follow on to know the Lord* †. Our names are not actually inserted in the Bible, but our characters are described there. He is the Redeemer of all who put their trust in him. You *will not* trust in him, unless you feel your need of him ; you *cannot*, unless you know him, as he is revealed in the word ; you *do not*, unless you love him, and are devoted to his cause and service. If you know yourself to be a sinner deserving to perish, if you see

\* Heb. xii. 14.

† Hof. vi. 3.

that there is no help or hope for you, but in Jesus, and venture yourself upon his gracious invitation, believing that he is able to save to the uttermost; and if you really include holiness and a deliverance from sin, in the idea of the salvation which you long for, then he is your Redeemer: If, among us, an act of grace was published, inviting all criminals to surrender themselves, with a promise of mercy to those who did; though no one was mentioned by name in the act, yet every one who complied with it, and pleaded it, would be entitled to the benefit. Such an act of grace is the gospel. The Lord says, *This is my beloved Son, hear him*\*. If you approve him he is your's. If you are still perplexed with doubts, they are owing to the weakness of your faith. But there are means appointed for the growth of faith. Wait patiently upon the Lord in the use of those means, and you shall find, he has not bid you seek his face in vain. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Live not in the omission of known duty. Do not perplex yourself with vain reasonings, but believe and obey, and the

\* Matt. iii. 17.

Lord shall be with you. There are some peculiar cases. Allowances must be made, for the effects of constitution and temperament. Some sincere persons are beset and followed, through life, with distressing temptations. But in general, simplicity, and obedience lead to assurance. And they who hearken to the Lord, and walk in the way of his commandments, *go on from strength to strength*\*; their peace and hope increase, like a river, which, from small beginnings, runs broader and deeper, till it falls into the ocean. But to return to Job—

III. Another article of his creed concerning the Redeemer, is, *He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth*. The latter or last days, in the prophetic style, usually denote the MESSIAH'S day, the times of the gospel. To this time Job looked forward. He beheld the promises afar off. Thus MESSIAH was the consolation of his people of old, as he who *was* to come. And it should be our consolation, to know that he *is* come. His standing upon the earth may include the whole of his appearance in the flesh; his life, passion, and resurrection. The manner of

\* Isa. xlviii. 18.



expression intimates something important and wonderful. Had Job, in the spirit of prophecy, spoken of any individual of Adam's race, of Isaiah, or Paul, there would have been nothing extraordinary predicted by saying, he shall stand upon the earth, for all men do so, in their successive generations. But that the Redeemer, the Lord of glory, the Maker of all things, should condescend to visit his creatures, to dwell with men for a season, to stand, and walk, upon the earth with them, clothed in a body like their own, is an event which never could have been expected, if it had not been revealed from heaven. It was the object of Job's faith, and well deserving the solemn preface, with which, he introduces his firm persuasion of it, *Oh! that my words were graven with an iron pen, in the rock for ever!* When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord of Hosts, instead of admiring the magnificence of the building, he was struck with the condescension of the Lord who would vouchsafe to notice it, and honour it with a symbol of his presence. *Will God indeed dwell with men upon the earth? Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, how much less this.*

*this house which I have built* \* ! But what was the visible glory which appeared in that temple, if compared with the glory of the only begotten Son of God, when he tabernacled in our flesh ! The human nature of Christ, is that true temple, not made with hands, in which God is manifested upon a throne of grace, that sinners may approach him without dismay, and receive, out of his fulness, grace for grace. To him all the prophets gave witness, on him the desire and hope of his people, in all ages, have been fixed. He was to stand upon the earth, as Mediator between God and man. And in the same office, now he is upon the throne of glory, he is, and will be, admired, adored and trusted in, by all his believing people, to the end of time.

IV. From the Redeemer's appearance upon earth, Job infers the restoration, and resurrection, of his own body. His trials had been great—bereaved of his children and substance, afflicted with grievous boils, harrassed with temptations, reproached by his friends : out of all these troubles the Lord his Redeemer delivered him, and his latter days

\* 1 Kings viii. 27.

were more prosperous than his beginning. But he knew that he must go the way of all the earth, that his body must lie in the grave, and return to dust. But he expected a future time after his dissolution, when in the flesh, for himself, and with his own eyes, he should see God. The expressions are strong and repeated. He does not speak the language of hesitation and doubt, but of confidence and certainty. It likewise appears that he placed his ultimate happiness in seeing God. His words are not very different from those of the apostle, *When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is* \*. To behold the glory of God, as our Redeemer, to be in a state of favour and communion with him, and according to the utmost capacity of our nature, to be conformed to him, in holiness and love; is that felicity which God has promised, and to which all his servants aspire. Some foretastes of it they enjoy in the present life, which cheer them under their trials, and raise them above the groveling pursuits of those, who have their portion only in this world; but their chief possession is in hope.

\* 1 John iii. 2.

They

They look forward to a brighter period, when they shall awaken from the sleep of death, to *behold his face in righteousness* \*. Then, and not till then, they shall be completely satisfied. The expectation of Job, therefore, affords a sufficient proof, that the doctrines of an immortal state, and of a resurrection unto life, were included in the revelations which God afforded to his people in the earliest times, and, consequently, that the religion, of the Old Testament and of the New, is substantially the same.

The great inquiry this subject should impress upon us, is, Are we thus minded? What think you, my dear friends, of Christ? Have you accepted him as your Redeemer. And have you a good hope that you shall see him to your comfort, when he shall return to judge the world? If so, you may rejoice. Changes you must expect. You must die, and your flesh must be food for worms. But he has promised to *change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself* †.

\* Ps. xvii. 15.

† Phil. iii. 21.

# S E R M O N XL.

THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED.

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I COR. XV. 20.

*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.*

**A**S in the animal œconomy, the action of the heart and of the lungs, though very different, are equally necessary for the maintenance of life, and we cannot say that either of them, is more essentially requisite, than the other; so in the system of divine revelation, there are some truths, the knowledge and belief of which, singly considered, are fundamentals, with respect to the salvation of a sinner. And though they are distinct in themselves, we cannot determine which  
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of them is of most importance to us; for unless we know, approve, and receive them all, we can have no experience of a life of faith in the Son of God. Such, for instance, is the scriptural doctrine concerning the depravity of human nature. This is a first principle; for unless we understand what our state is in the sight of God, the enormity of our transgressions, and our incapacity for true happiness, until our hearts are changed by the power of his grace, we cannot rightly understand a single chapter in the Bible. Such, likewise, is the doctrine of the atonement. For if we could know how totally we are lost, without knowing the gracious method which God has appointed for our recovery, we must, unavoidably, sink into despair. Again, if we were sensible of our state, as sinners, and even if we trusted in Christ for salvation, yet the apostle observes, in this chapter, that unless he be indeed risen from the dead, our faith in him would be in vain, and we should still be in our sins. The resurrection of Christ, therefore, is a doctrine, absolutely essential to our hope and comfort: and it is likewise a sure pledge, that they who believe in him, shall be raised  
from

from the dead also, by virtue of their union with him, and according to his pattern. For *now is Christ risen from the dead, and is become the first-fruits of them that slept.* Let us, at present, consider his resurrection—The sure consequence of it, that his people shall be raised from the dead, will offer to our meditations, from the following verses.

The resurrection of Christ, being, as a fact, the great pillar upon which the weight and importance of Christianity rest, it has pleased the Lord, to put, the indubitable proof of it, within our power. There is no one point of ancient uninspired history, so certainly and unquestionably authenticated. It may seem unnecessary to prove it, and to many of you, it is entirely so. Yet I think it proper to take some notice of it; not so much on account of the weak and trifling cavils of infidels, as for the sake of persons who may be assaulted with temptations. For many plain people, who are not much acquainted with the subtleties of sceptics, are sometimes pestered with difficulties and objections in their own minds, perhaps, more shrewd and powerful, than such as are commonly found in books, or retailed in coffee-houses.

houses. For unbelief is deeply rooted in every heart; and Satan, our great enemy, can, and, if permitted, will, work powerfully upon this evil disposition. He endeavours to beat us off from the belief of every truth of scripture, and of this among the rest. And many persons, who have been so well convinced that our Lord rose from the dead, as to venture their souls and their all upon it, have found themselves at a loss how to answer the enemy, in an hour of sharp and pressing temptation.

Let us suppose then, that we had lately received the news of some extraordinary, and almost incredible event; and let us consider, what evidence we should require to satisfy us that the report was true, and apply the same kind of reasoning to the point in hand. That there was, a great while ago, a person named Jesus, who gathered disciples, and died upon a cross, is universally acknowledged. Both Jews and Heathens, who lived at the time, and afterwards, not only admitted it, but urged it, as a reproach, against his followers. Many testimonies, of this kind, are still extant.



The turning point between his enemies and his friends, is, *his resurrection*. This has been denied. We acknowledge that he did not appear publicly, after he arose, as he did before his death, but only to a competent number of his followers, to whom he shewed himself, and satisfied them, by many infallible proofs, that he was alive, and that he was the same person whom they had seen crucified. They reported what they saw, and we believe their report. We are, therefore, to enquire, Who they were? And on what grounds we receive and rely upon their testimony?

If they were mistaken themselves, or, if they were engaged and agreed in a crafty design of imposing upon mankind, we, who depend upon their relation, may be involved in their mistake, or deceived by their artifice. But if neither of these suppositions can possibly be true, if they were competent and impartial witnesses, then we are not only justified in giving credit to their testimony, but it must be unreasonable, and (in a case of this importance) presumptuous, and dangerous to reject it.

I. That

I. That they were competent judges of what they asserted, is evident,

1. *From their numbers.* The eye-witnesses, of this fact, were many. *He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that he was seen of five hundred brethren at once; after that he was seen of James, then of all the apostles. And last of all, he was seen of me also* \*. Thus Paul wrote when multitudes who lived at the time, were still living, and would readily have contradicted him, if he had declared an untruth. Five hundred concurring witnesses are sufficient to establish the credit of a fact, which they all saw with their own eyes, if their word may be depended upon. We can be certain of things which we never saw, no otherwise, than by the testimony of others. And certainty may be attained in this way. For though some persons would appropriate the word *demonstration* to *mathematical* evidence, yet *moral* evidence may be, in many cases, equally conclusive, and compel assent, with equal force. I am so fully satisfied by the report of others, that there are such cities

\* 1 Cor. xv. 5—8.

as Paris or Rome, though I never saw them, that I am no more able seriously to question their existence, than I am to doubt the truth of a proposition in Euclid, which I have seen demonstrated.

2. *From the nature of the fact*, in which it was not possible that so many persons, could be mistaken or deceived. Some of them saw him, not once only, but frequently. His appearance to others, was attended with peculiar striking circumstances and effects. His disciples seem not to have expected his resurrection, though he had often foretold it, previous to his sufferings. Nor did they hastily credit the women who first saw him, in their way from the sepulchre. Thomas refused to believe the report of all his brethren, to whom our Lord had shewn himself. He would see for himself; he required more than ocular proof; for he said, *Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe* \*. It is no wonder, that when these proofs were offered him, he fully yielded to conviction, and with gratitude and joy, addressed his risen Saviour, in the

\* John xx. 25.

language of adoration and love, *My Lord, and my God!* But his former conduct shewed that he was not credulous, nor disposed to receive the report as a truth, however desirable, without sufficient evidence.

II. As they were competent judges, so they were upright and faithful witnesses: There is no more room to suspect that they had a design to deceive others, than that they were mistaken or deceived themselves. For

I. If we judge of them by their writings, we must, at least, allow them to have been well-meaning men. They profess to aim at promoting the knowledge and honour of the true God, and thereby to promote the morality and happiness of mankind. Their conduct was uniformly consistent with their profession, and their doctrines and precepts, were evidently suited, to answer their design: The penmen of the New Testament were, confessedly, men in private life, most of them destitute of literature, and engaged in low occupations, till they became the disciples of Jesus. Is it probable, that men, who speak so honourably of God, who inculcate, upon their fellow-creatures, such an entire devotedness to his will and service, should  
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be impostors themselves? Is it at all credible, that a few men, in an obscure situation, should form a consistent and well concerted plan, sufficient to withstand and overcome the prejudices, habits, and customs, both of Jews and Heathens; to institute a new religion; and, without the assistance of interest or arms, to spread it rapidly and successfully, in a few years, throughout the greatest part of the Roman empire? Or is it possible, that such men could, at their first effort, exhibit a scheme of theology and morality, so vastly superior to the united endeavours of the philosophers of all ages? A learned man in France, attempted to prove (for what will not learned men attempt?) that most of the Latin poems, which are attributed to those whom we call the Classic writers, and particularly the *Æneid* of Virgil, were not the production of the authors whose names they bear, but gross forgeries, fabricated by monks, in the dark ages of ignorance, and successfully obtruded upon the world as genuine, till *he* arose to detect the imposture. He gained but few profelytes to his absurd paradox. Yet, to suppose that men who could only express their own dull

sentiments, in barbarous Latin, were capable of writing with the fire and elegance of Virgil, when they undertook to impose upon the world; or to affirm that the *Principia* of Sir Isaac Newton, was in reality written by an ignorant plow-man, and only sent abroad under the sanction of a celebrated name; cannot be more repugnant to true taste, sound judgment, and common sense, than to imagine, that the Evangelists and Apostles, were, from their own resources, capable of writing such a book as the New Testament. The whole of which must stand or fall with the doctrine of our Lord's resurrection.

2. But farther, They could not possibly propose any advantage to themselves, in their endeavours to propagate the Christian religion, if they had not been assured, that the crucified Jesus, whom they preached, was risen from the dead, and had taken possession of his kingdom. Knowing whom they had believed, filled with a constraining sense of his love, and depending upon his promise and power, to support them, in the service to which had called them, they were neither ashamed, nor afraid, to proclaim his gospel, and to invite and enjoin sinners every where

where to put their trust in him. Otherwise, they had nothing to expect but such treatment as they actually met with, for professing their belief of his resurrection; and especially for the pains they took to publish it: first among the people who had put him to death, and afterwards among the Heathens. It required no great sagacity to foresee, that this doctrine would be an offence to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks \*. They were, in fact, despised, hated, opposed, and persecuted, wherever they went; and those who espoused their cause, were immediately exposed to a participation in their sufferings. Nor was there the least probability that the event could be otherwise. Impostors there have been many, but we cannot conceive that any set of men, would deliberately, and by consent, contrive an imposture, which, in the nature of the thing, could procure nothing to them, or to their followers, but contempt, stripes, imprisonment, and death.

3. Even if we could for a moment suppose them capable of so wild and wicked an undertaking, as, under pretence of the ser-

\*. 1 Cor. i. 23.

vice of God, to provoke and dare the hatred of mankind, by asserting and propagating an offensive falshood, it would be impossible, upon that ground, to account for the success which they met with. If this counsel and cause had not been of God, it must have come to nought \*. But by preaching Jesus and his resurrection, in defiance of all the arts and rage of their enemies, they mightily prevailed over the established customs, and inveterate prejudices of mankind, and brought multitudes into the belief of their doctrine, against all disadvantages. The Lord confirmed their word with signs following. The miracles which were wrought in the name of Jesus, were numerous, notorious, and undeniable. And the moral effects of their preaching, though too frequent and universal to be styled miraculous, were such, as can only be, with reason, ascribed to a divine power. The pillars of paganism, the superstitions of idol worship, though, in every country, connected and incorporated with the frame of civil government, and guarded for ages, not more by popular veneration, than for reasons of state, were very soon shaken,

\* Acts v. 38.

and,



and, in no great space of time, subverted. Within about two hundred years after Tacitus had described the Christians as the objects of universal contempt and hatred, Christianity became the established religion of the empire. And in a letter of Pliny to Trajan on the subject, we have indisputable evidence, that even in the time of Tacitus, hated, vilified, and persecuted, as the Christians were, their religion so greatly prevailed, that, in many places, the idol temples were almost deserted.

4. But the proof of the resurrection of Christ, which is the most important and satisfactory of any, does not depend upon arguments and historical evidence, with which multitudes of true Christians are unacquainted; but is, in its own nature, equally convincing in all ages, and equally level to all capacities. They who have found the gospel to be the power of God to the salvation of their souls, have the witness in themselves. And are very sure, that the doctrine, which enlightened their understandings, awakened their consciences, delivered them from the guilt and dominion of sin, brought them into a state of peace and communion with God, and in-

spired them with a bright and glorious hope of eternal life, must be true. They know that the Lord is risen indeed, because they are made partakers of the power of his resurrection, and have experienced a change in themselves, which could only be wrought, by the influence of that holy Spirit which Jesus is exalted to bestow. And many believers, though not qualified to dispute with philoſophers and ſceptics, upon their own learned ground, can put them to ſhame and to ſilence, by the integrity and purity of their conduct, by their patience and cheerfulness under afflictions; and would eſpecially ſilence them, if they were eye-witneſſes of the compoſure and elevation of ſpirit, with which, true believers in a riſen Saviour, welcome the approach of death.

This is the evidence, which I would principally recommend to my hearers to ſeek after. If the reſurrection of Chriſt, be a truth, and a fact, much depends upon the right belief of it. I ſay *a right belief*; for though I have offered you a brief view of the external evidence in proof of this point, I am aware that I am not preaching to Jews, or Mohammedans. If I ſhould aſk you,  
Believeſt

Believest thou the resurrection? Might I not answer myself, as the apostle did on another occasion, *I know that thou believest* \*? But so powerful is the effect of our depravity, that it is possible, yea very common, for people most certainly to believe the truth of a proposition, so as not to be able to entertain a doubt of it, and yet to act as if they could demonstrate it to be false. Let me ask you, for instance, Do you believe that you shall die? I know that you believe it. But do you indeed live, as if you were really assured of the certainty of death, and (which is equally undeniable) the uncertainty of life? So in the present case—If Christ be risen from the dead, according to the scriptures, then all that the scripture declares of the necessity and design of his sufferings, of his present glory, and of his future advent, must be true likewise. What a train of weighty consequences depend upon his resurrection! If he rose from the dead; then he is the Lord of the dead, and of the living—then he has the keys of death and hades—then he will return to judge the world, and you must see him for yourself, and appear at his tri-

\* Acts xxvi. 27.

bunal—then, it is he with whom you have to do—and then, finally, unless you really love, trust, and serve him, unless he is the beloved and the Lord of your heart, your present state is awfully dangerous and miserable.

But let those who love his name be joyful in him. Your Lord who was dead, is alive, and *because he liveth, you shall live also. If ye be risen with him, seek the things which are above, where he sitteth on the right hand of God. And, when he, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

# S E R M O N XLI.

DEATH BY ADAM, LIFE BY CHRIST.

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I COR. XV. 21, 22.

*For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

**F**ROM Mr. Handel's acknowledged abilities as a composer, and particularly, from what I have heard of his great taste and success, in adapting the style of his music to the subject, I judge, that this passage afforded him a fair occasion of displaying his genius and powers. Two ideas, vastly important in themselves, are here represented in the strongest light, by being placed in contrast to each other. Surely the most solemn, the most

most pathetic strains must be employed, if they accord with the awful words, *By man came death, in Adam all die*. Nor can even the highest efforts of the heavenly harpers, more than answer, to the joy, the triumph and the praise, which the other part of my text would excite in our hearts, if we are interested in it, provided we were capable of comprehending the full force and meaning of the expressions, *By man came also the resurrection, In Christ shall all be made alive*.

By one man came death. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*\*. Sin opened the door to death. The creation, at the beginning, was full of order and beauty. *God saw every thing that he had made, and behold all was very good* †. Adam, happy in the image and favour of his Maker, breathed the air of immortality in paradise. While moral evil was unknown, natural evils, such as sickness, pain and death, had no place. How different has the state of things been since! Would you account for the change? Charge it upon man. He sinned against his Creator, Lawgiver and Benefactor, and thus, by him, came death. The

\* Rom. v. 12.

† Gen. i. 31.

fact is sure, and therefore, our reasonings upon it, in order to account for it, farther than we are enlightened and taught by scripture, are unnecessary and vain. God is infinitely wise, and therefore this change was foreseen by him. He doubtless could have prevented it, for to Omnipotence every thing that does not imply a contradiction, is possible, is easy. But he permitted it, and therefore it must have been agreeable to his wisdom, holiness and goodness, to permit it. He can overrule it to the purposes of his own glory, and to ends worthy of himself, and he has assured us, that he will do so. Thus far I can go, nor do I wish to go farther. An endeavour to vindicate the ways of God to man, to fallen man, upon the grounds of what he proudly calls his reason, would be an impracticable, and, in my view, a presumptuous attempt. In proportion as his grace enlightens our minds, convinces us of our ignorance, and humbles our pride, we shall be satisfied, that in whatever he appoints or permits, he acts in a manner becoming his own perfections. Nor can we be satisfied in any other way. We see, we feel, that evil is in the world. Death reigns.

It

It has pleased God to afford us a revelation, to visit us with the light of his gospel. If, instead of reasoning, we believe and obey, a way is set before us, by which we may finally overcome every evil, and obtain a happiness and honour, superior to what belonged to man, in his original state. They who refuse this gospel, must be left to their cavils and perplexities, until the day, in which, the great Judge and Governor of all, shall arise to plead his own cause, and to vindicate his proceedings, from their arrogant exceptions. *Then every mouth will be stopped*\*. Let us look to the heavens, which are higher than we; and attend to what we may learn from sure principles, that the earth, with all its inhabitants, is but as dust upon the balance, if compared with the immensity of God's creation. Unless we could know the whole, and the relation, which this very small part, bears to the rest of his government, we must be utterly incompetent to judge, how it becomes the great God to act. We are infected with the sin, and we are subject to the death, with all its concomitant evils, which came into the world by the

\* Job xxxv. 5.



first man. But we are likewise invited to a participation of all the blessings, which the second Man has procured, by his atonement for sin, and by his victory over death. *For as by man came death, so by man came also the resurrection from the dead.*

Let us take a survey, first of the malady, and then of the remedy.

I. The malady, the effect and wages of sin, is *death*. Many ideas are included in this word, taken in the scriptural sense.

1. The sentence annexed to the transgression of that commandment, which was given as an especial test of Adam's obedience, and which affects all his posterity, is thus expressed, *In the day that thou eatest—thou shalt surely die\**. But man was not, ordinarily, to die by a stroke of apoplexy; or by a flash of lightning. The sentence includes all the natural evils, all the variety of woe, which sin has brought into the world. The rebellious tempers and appetites which so often cut short the life of man, together with the sufferings and troubles which, sooner or later, bring him down with sorrow to the grave, being the consequences of sin, may

\* Gen. ii. 17.

be properly considered, as belonging to that death, in which they terminate. Even the earth and the elements partook in the effects of man's disobedience. Thorns and thistles \* were not the produce of the ground, till after he had sinned. Nor can I suppose that hurricanes, floods and earthquakes, were known in a state of innocence. But had the whole earth been a paradise, man, having sinned, must have been miserable. It is not in situation to make that heart happy, which is the seat of inordinate passions, rage, envy, malice, lust and avarice. And were the earth a paradise now, it would be stained with blood, and filled with violence, cruelty and misery, while it is inhabited by sinners. Many persons at present, who dwell in stately houses, and have every thing around them that is suited to gratify and please their senses, know by painful experience, how little happiness these external advantages afford, while their minds are tortured with disappointments and anxiety. Thus the outward afflictions, which, every where, surround and assail the sinner, and the malignant passions, which, like vultures, continually gnaw his

\* Gen. iii. 18.

heart,

heart, all combine to accelerate the execution of the sentence of death.

2. *Death*, in a very important sense, entered immediately with sin. Besides the rational life, which still distinguishes man from the brute creation, he originally possessed a spiritual and divine life, for he was created in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. He was capable of communion with God, of rejoicing in his favour, and of proposing his will and glory as the great end of his actions. In a word, the presence and life of God dwelt in him, as in a temple. As the soul is the life of the body, which becomes a carcase, a prey to worms and putrefaction, when the soul has forsaken it; so God is the life of the soul. Sin defaced his temple, and he forsook it. In this sense, when Adam had transgressed the law, he died instantly, in that very day, in that very moment. He lost his spiritual life, he lost all desire for communion with God, he no longer retained any love for his Benefactor. He dreaded his presence, he sought to hide himself from him, and, when obliged to appear and answer, stood self-condemned before him, till  
revived

revived and restored by the promise of grace. And thus his posterity derive from him, what may be called, a living death. They are dead while they live, *dead in trespasses and sins* \*, till they are again quickened by his holy Spirit. This is not a subject of common place declamation ; it is to be proved by the tenor of scripture, the nature of redemption, and the very reason of things. Unless we allow that man, in his present state, is thus fallen, depraved and dead ; we must be reduced to the absurdity of supposing, that God made him such a creature as he now is. That when he formed him for himself, and endued him with a capacity and desires, which nothing short of his own infinite goodness can satisfy, he should at the same time create him with a disposition to hate his Maker, to seek his satisfaction in sensuality upon a level with the brutes, and to confine his views and pursuits within the limits of this precarious life, while he feels, in defiance of himself, an instinctive thirst for immortality. Man considered in this view, would be a solecism in the creation ; and they who do not acquiesce, in the cause which

\* Eph. ii. 1.

the scripture assigns, for the inconsistencies and contradictions, which are found in his character, will never be able to assign any other cause, which will bear the trial of sober and rational examination. What the poet says of Beelzebub, *Majestic though in ruins*, may be truly affirmed of man. His faculties and powers are proofs of his original greatness; his awful misapplication of them equally prove, that he is a fallen and ruined creature. He has lost his true life, he is dead in sin, and unless renewed and revived by the grace God, can only, in a future state, be fit for the company of the fallen angels.

3. *Death*, as the wages of sin, extends still farther. There is the *second death*, the final and eternal misery of soul and body in hell. This we know is the dreadful lot of the impenitent. We need no other proof that this was included in the sentence; for, certainly, the righteous Judge, would not inflict a greater punishment than he had denounced. Indeed, it follows of course, in the very nature of things, if we admit the soul to be immortal, a resurrection both of the just and the unjust, and that there remains no other sacri-

fice for sin, in favour of those who reject the gospel. For to be disowned of God in the great day, to be separated from his favourable presence, and conscious of his endless displeasure; to be abandoned to the unrestrained rage of sinful dispositions, and hopeless despair; to be incessantly tormented by the stings of a remorseful conscience must be, upon the principles of scripture, the unavoidable consequences of being cut off by death, in an unhumiliated, unpardoned, un-sanctified state.

II. But, blessed be God, the gospel reveals a relief and remedy, fully adapted to the complicated misery in which sin has involved us. *As by man came death, by man also came the resurrection from the dead.* MESSIAH has made an end of sin, and destroyed the power of death. They who *believe in him, though they were dead shall live\**. For he is the Resurrection of the dead, and the Life of the living.

I. He raises the soul from the death of sin, unto a life of righteousness. By his blood he procures a right and liberty, and by his Spirit he communicates a power, that

\* John xi. 25.

those who were afar off, may draw nigh to God. Thus, even at present, believers are said to be *risen with him* \*. Their spiritual life is renewed, and their happiness is already commenced, though it be as yet subject to abatements.

r. Though when they are made partakers of his grace, and thereby delivered from the condemning power of the law, sin has no longer dominion over them, as formerly; yet it still wars and strives within them, and their life is a state of continual warfare. They now approve the law of God, *as holy, just and good, and delight in it after the inward man* †, yet they are renewed but in part. They *feel a law in their members warring against the law of their minds. They cannot do the things that they would, nor as they would; for when they would do good, evil is present with them.* They are conscious of a defect, and a defilement, attending their best services. Their attainments are unspeakably short of the desires, which love to the Redeemer has raised in their hearts. They are ashamed, and sometimes almost discouraged. They adopt the apos-

\* Col. iii. 1.

† Rom. vii. 12—19.

tle's language, *Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.* But with him they can likewise say, *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* They know he is on their side, and expect that he will at last *make them more than conquerors*; yet, while the conflict lasts, they have much to suffer, and much to lament.

2. They are subject, like other people, to the various calamities and distresses incident to this state of mortality; and they have, more or less, troubles peculiar to themselves, arising from the nature of their profession and conduct (if they are faithful to their Lord) while they live in a world that lieth in wickedness. But the curse and sting is taken out of their afflictions, and they are so moderated and sanctified, by the wisdom and grace of him whom they serve, that in the event, they work for their good. But though they *yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness*\*, in themselves, and at the time, they are not joyous but grievous.

3. They are still subject to the stroke of death; the separation of soul and body. But this death has lost its sting, as to them.

\* Heb. xii. 11.



And therefore they are said, not to die, but to sleep in Jesus. Death is not their enemy but their friend. To them, instead of being an evil, it proves a deliverance from all evil, and an entrance into everlasting life.

2. That new life to which they are raised, is surely connected with life eternal, the life of grace, with the life of glory. For Christ liveth in them, and being united to him by faith, they shall live while he liveth. They only shut their eyes upon the pains and sorrows of this world, to open them immediately in his presence, and so *they shall be for ever with the Lord*. How wonderful and happy is the transition! From disease and anguish, from weeping friends, and often from a state of indigence and obscurity, in which they have no friends to compassionate them, they remove to a state of glory, honour and immortality, to a mansion in the realms of light, to a seat near the throne of God. In the language of mortals, this ineffable honour and happiness is shadowed out to us, by the emblems of a white robe, a golden harp, a palm-branch, (the token of victory) and a crown, not of oak or laurel, of gold or diamonds, *but a crown*

*of life.* Such honour have all the saints. However afflicted or neglected, despised or oppressed while upon earth, soon as their willing spirits take their flight from hence, they shine, like the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. Thus Lazarus, lay, for a time, diseased, necessitous and slighted at the rich man's gate. Yet he was not without attendants. A guard of angels waited around him, and when he died conveyed his spirit into Abraham's bosom \*. The Jews thought very highly of Abraham, the father of their nation, the father of the faithful. Our Lord therefore teaches us by this representation, that the beggar Lazarus, was not only happy after death, but highly exalted by him, who seeth not as man seeth, for he was placed in Abraham's bosom, a situation, which, according to the custom of the Jews, was a mark of peculiar favour, intimacy and distinction. Thus the beloved disciple, was seated in the bosom of our Lord, when he celebrated his last passover with his disciples †.

3. Their dead bodies shall be raised, at the great day, not in their former state of

\* Luke xvi. 22.

† John xiii. 22—25.

weakness and corruption, but that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power, and the mortal shall put on immortality. He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned according to the likeness of his own glorious body. So that his own resurrection is both the pledge, and the pattern of their's. I have only farther to observe upon this subject at present, that as Adam is the root and head of all mankind, from whence they all derive a sinful and mortal nature; so Jesus, the second Adam, is the root of a people who are united to him, planted and engrafted in him, by faith. To these the resurrection, considered as a blessing, is to be restrained. There will be a resurrection of the wicked likewise \*, but to condemnation, *shame and everlasting contempt* †. But the connection is close and indissoluble, between Christ the first-fruits, and them that are Christ's, at his coming.

May we be happily prepared for this great event, *that when he shall appear we may have confidence in him, and not be ashamed before him* ‡. Happy they who shall then be able to welcome him in the language of the pro-

\* John v. 29. † Dan. xii. 2. ‡ 1 John ii. 28.

phet, *Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation* \*. But how awful the contrast of those (many of them once the great, mighty and honourable of the earth) who shall behold him with horror, and in the anguish of their souls, shall call (in vain) *to the rocks and mountains, to fall on them and hide them from his presence, saying, The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand †?*

\* Isa. xxv. 9.

† Rev. vi. 16, 17.

# S E R M O N XLII.

THE GENERAL RESURRECTION.

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I COR. XV. 51, 52.

*Behold, I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

**A**N object in itself great, and which we know to be so, will appear small to us, if we view it from a distance. The stars, for example, in our view, are but as little specks or points of light; and the tip of a finger, if held very near to the eye, is sufficient to hide from us the whole body of the  
sun.

fun. Distance of time, has an effect upon us, in its kind, similar to distance of space. It diminishes in our mind the idea of what, we are assured, is, in its own nature, of great magnitude and importance. If any of us were informed that we should certainly die before this day closes, what a sudden and powerful change would take place in our thoughts? That we all *must* die, is a truth, of which we are no less certain, than that we are now alive. But because it is possible that we may not die to-day, or to-morrow, or this year, or for several years to come, we are often little more affected by the thoughts of death, than if we expected to live here for ever. In like manner, if you receive the scripture, as a divine revelation, I need offer you no other proof, that there is a day, a great day, approaching, which will put an end to the present state of things, and introduce a state, unchangeable, and eternal. Then *the Lord will descend with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God. The earth, and all its works, will be burnt up.* The great Judge will appear, the tribunal be fixed, the books opened, and all the human race must give an account of them.

themselves to God, and, according to his righteous award, be happy, or miserable, in a degree beyond expression, or conception, and that for ever.

If we were infallibly assured, that this tremendous scene would open upon us to-morrow; or if, while I am speaking, we should be startled with the signs of our Lord's coming in the air, what confusion and alarm would overspread the congregation? Yet, if the scripture be true, the hour is approaching, when we must all be spectators of this solemn event, and parties nearly interested in it. But because it is at a distance, we can hear of it, speak of it, and profess to expect it, with a coolness, almost equal to indifference. May the Lord give us that faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, that while I aim to lead your meditations to the subject of my text, we may be duly impressed by it: and that we may carry from hence such a consideration of our latter end, as may incline our hearts to that which is our true wisdom!

Many curious enquiries and speculations might be started from this passage, but which, because I judge them to be *more*  
*curious*

*curious than useful*, it is my intention to wave. I shall confine myself to what is plainly expressed, because I wish rather to profit than to amuse my hearers. The principal subject before us, is the resurrection of the dead, in the most pleasing view of it; for my text speaks only of those, who shall change the mortal and corruptible, for incorruption and immortality.

I. The introduction, *Behold I shew you a mystery.*

II. What we are taught to expect. *We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.*

III. The suddenness of the event. *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.*

IV. The grand preceding signal. *The trumpet shall sound.*

I. The apostle apprizes the Corinthians, that he is about to *shew them a mystery*. As the word *mystery* has been treated with no small contempt, I shall embrace this occasion of offering you a short explanation of it, as it is used in the scriptures. We are allowed to say, that there are mysteries in nature, and, perhaps, we may be allowed to speak of mysteries in providence; but though an apostle assures us, that *Great is the mystery*  
*of*



of *godliness* \*, many persons will scarcely bear the application of the word to religion. And a late ingenious writer, who has many admirers in the present day, has ventured to affirm, in print, that where mystery begins, religion ends. If the frequency of the case did not, in some degree, abate our wonder, *this* might seem almost a mystery, that any persons, who profess to believe the scripture, should so openly and flatly contradict, what the scripture expressly and repeatedly declares. Or that while, as men of reason and philosophy, they are forced to acknowledge a mystery in every part of creation, and must confess it beyond their ability, to explain the growth of a blade of grass; they should, in opposition to all the rules of analogy, conclude, that the gospel, the most important concern of man, and which is commended to us, as the most eminent display of the wisdom and power of God, is the only subject so level to our apprehensions, as to be obvious, at first sight, to the most careless and superficial observers. That great numbers of people are very far from being accurate and diligent in their religious enquiries,

\* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

is too evident to be denied. How often do we meet with persons of sense, who talk with propriety on philosophical, political, or commercial subjects, and yet, when they speak of religion, discover such gross ignorance, as would be shameful in a child of ten years old, and amounts to a full proof, that they have not thought it worth their while to acquire, even a slight knowledge of its first principles. Can we even conceive the possibility of a divine revelation, that should have nothing in it mysterious, to persons of this character?

A mystery, according to the notation of the Greek word, signifies, a secret. And all the peculiar truths of the gospel, may justly be styled mysteries, or secrets, for two reasons.

1. Because the discovery of them is beyond the reach of fallen man, and they neither would, or could, have been known, without a revelation from God. This is eminently true of the Resurrection. The light of nature, which we often hear so highly commended, may afford some faint glimmerings of a future state, but gives no intimation of a resurrection. The men of wisdom at Athens, the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers,

phers, who differed widely in most parts of their respective schemes, united in deriding this sentiment, and contemptuously styled the apostle Paul a babbler \*, for preaching it. But this secret is to us made known.

And we are assured, not only, that the Lord will receive, to himself, the departing spirits of his people, but that he will give commandment concerning their dust, and, in due time, raise their vile bodies, to a conformity with his own glorious body.

2. Because, though they are revealed expressly in the scripture, such is the grossness of our conceptions, and the strength of our prejudices, that the truths of revelation, are still unintelligible to us, without a farther revelation of their true sense to the mind, by the influence of his holy Spirit. Otherwise, how can the secret of the Lord be restrained to those who fear him †, when the book, which contains it, is open to all; and the literal and grammatical meaning of the words, is in the possession of many who fear him not?

Books in the arts and sciences, may be said, to be full of mysteries, to those who have

\* Acts xvii. 18.

† Ps. xxv. 14.

not a suitable capacity and taste for them ; or who do not apply themselves to study them with diligence, and patiently submit to learn, gradually, one thing after another. If you put a treatise on the mathematics, or a system of music, into the hands of a plowman or labourer, you will not be surprized to find, that he cannot understand a single page. Shall the works of a Sir Isaac Newton, or of a Handel, be thus inexplicable to one person, while another peruses them with admiration and delight ? Shall these require a certain turn of mind, and a close attention ? And can it be reasonably supposed, that the Bible is the only book, that requires no peculiar disposition, or degree of application, to be understood ; though it is designed to make us acquainted with the *deep things of God* \* ? In one respect, indeed, there is an encouraging difference. Divine truths lie, thus far, equally open to all ; that though none can learn them, unless they are taught of God ; yet, all, who are sensible of their own weakness, may expect his teaching, if they humbly seek it by prayer. Many people are, perhaps, incapable of being ma-

\* 1 Cor. ii. 10.

thematicians.

thematically. They have not a genius for the science. But there is none teacheth like God. He can give not only light, but sight; not only lessons, but the capacity necessary for their reception. And while his mysteries are hidden from the wise and prudent, who are too proud to wait upon him for instruction, he reveals them unto babes.

It may, perhaps, be thought, that a belief of the doctrine of the resurrection, does not require the same teaching of the holy Spirit, that is necessary to the right knowledge of some other doctrines of the gospel. But such a belief as may affect, cheer, and animate the heart, must be given us from above, for we cannot reason ourselves into it. Nay, this divine teaching is necessary, to secure the mind from the vain reasonings, perplexities, and imaginations, which will bewilder our thoughts upon the subject, unless we learn to yield in simplicity of faith, to what the scripture has plainly revealed, and can be content to know no farther, before the proper time.

II. What we are here taught to expect, is thus expressed—*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.* We are not to suppose,

that the whole human race will die, and fall from the earth, before the resurrection. Some will be living at the time, and among them, some of the Lord's people. Of the living, it cannot properly be said, that they will be raised from the dead. But they will experience a change, which will put them exactly in the same state with the others. Their mortality shall be swallowed up in life. Thus we conceive it to have been with Enoch and Elijah. They did not die like other men. But their mortal natures were frail and sinful, like ours, and incapable of sustaining the glories of heaven, without a preparation. Flesh and blood, in its present state, cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither can corruption inherit incorruption. But the dead shall arise, and the living shall be changed. Here is a wide field for speculation, but I mean not to enter it. Curiosity would be glad to know, how our bodies, when changed, shall still be the same. Let us first determine, how that body, which was once an infant, is the very same, when it becomes a full grown man, or a man in extreme old age. Let us explain the transmutation of a caterpillar, or silk-worm, which,

which, from a reptile, becomes a butterfly. What a wonderful change is this, both in appearance and in powers? Who would suppose it to be the same creature? Yet, who can deny it? It is safest and most comfortable for us, to refer to the wisdom and power of God, the accomplishment of his own word.

III. These great events will take place unexpectedly and suddenly. *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.* We have reason to believe, that a part, at least, of mankind, will be employed as they are now, and as they were in the days of Noah and Lot \*, eating, drinking, buying, selling, building, and planting; having nothing less in their thoughts, than the calamity and destruction, which shall overwhelm them without warning. For while they are promising themselves peace, the day of the Lord shall come upon them, like a thief in the night, unlooked for, and, like the pangs of a labouring woman, unavoidable. *In that day the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted †.* So large

\* Luke xvii. 26—30.

† Isa. ii. 6.

a part of divine prophecy remains yet to be fulfilled, that I apprehend, it is not probable that any of us shall be alive, when this great and terrible day of the Lord shall be revealed. But are not some of us exposed to a similar, dreadful surprize! If you die in your sins, the consequences will be no less deplorable to you, than if you saw the whole frame of nature perishing with you. Alas, what will you do, whither will you flee for help, or where will you leave your glory, if, while you are engrossed by the cares or pleasures of this world, death should arrest you, and summons you to judgment! The rich man in the gospel is not charged with any crimes of peculiar enormity. It is not said that he ground the faces of the poor, or that he, by fraud or oppression, kept back the hire of the labourers who had reaped his harvest; he only rejoiced in his wealth, and in having much goods laid up for many years, and that, therefore, he might securely eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee* \*. Awful disappointment! Thus will it be

\* Luke xii. 20.



sooner or later, with all whose hearts and portions are in this world, but are not rich towards God! Consider this, you that are like-minded with him. Tremble at the thought of being found in the number of those, who have all their consolation here, and who, when they die, must leave their all behind them. Now is the acceptable time, the day of salvation. Now, if you will seek the Lord, he will be found of you. Now if you pray for grace and faith, he will answer you. But *when once the master of the house shall arise, and with his own sovereign, authoritative hand, shall shut the door of his mercy, it will then be in vain, and too late, to say, Lord, Lord, open unto us\*!*

IV. The great scene will be introduced by a signal. *At the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound.* Thus the approach of a king or a judge is usually announced; and the scripture frequently borrows images from our little affairs and customs, and, in condescension to our weakness, illustrates things, in themselves too great for our conceptions, by comparing them with those which are more familiar to us.

\* Luke xiii. 25.

It will, indeed, be comparing great things with small, if I attempt to illustrate this sublime idea, by local customs, which obtain in this kingdom. At a time of assize, when the judges, to whom the administration and guardianship of our laws are entrusted, are making their entrance, expectation is awake, and a kind of reverence and awe is felt, even by those who are not immediately concerned in their inquest. The dignity of their office, the purpose for which they come, the concourse of people, the order of the procession, and the sound of the trumpet, all concur in raising an emotion in the hearts of the spectators. Happy are they then, upon whom the inflexible law has no demand! But who can describe the terror, with which the sound of the trumpet is heard, by the unhappy criminal; and the throbbings of *his* heart, if he be already convicted in his own conscience, and knows or fears, that there is sufficient evidence at hand, to fix the fact upon him, and to prove his guilt? For soon the judge will take his seat, the books will be opened, the cause tried, and the criminal sentenced. Many circumstances of this kind are alluded to in the scripture, to assist us in forming

forming some conception of what will take place, when all the race of Adam, small and great, shall stand before the sovereign Judge, the one Law-giver, who is able to save and to destroy. But the concourse, the solemnity, the scrutiny, the event, in the most weighty causes that can come before a human judicature, are mere shadows, and trivial as the sports of children, if compared with the business of this tremendous tribunal. *The Lord himself will descend with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God.* What a trumpet will that be, whose sound shall dissolve the frame of nature, and awaken the dead? When the Lord is seated upon his great *white throne* \*, the heavens and the earth shall flee from his presence; but the whole race of mankind shall be assembled before him, each one to give an account of himself, to him, from whose penetrating knowledge, no secret can be hidden, and, from whose unerring, inflexible sentence, there can be no appeal. *Where then shall the wicked and the ungodly appear?—*

But it will be a joyful day to believers. They shall be separated, as the wheat from

\* Rev. xx. 11.

the tares, and arranged at his right hand. When the Lord shall come, attended by his holy angels, his redeemed people will re-assume their bodies, refined, and freed from all that was corruptible; and those of them who shall be then living, will be changed, and caught up to meet him in the air. He will then own them, approve and crown them, before assembled worlds. Every charge that can be brought against them will be overruled, and their plea, that they trusted in him for salvation, be admitted and ratified. They will be accepted and justified. They will shine like the sun in his train, and attend, as assessors with him, when he shall pass final judgment upon his and their enemies. Then he will be admired in and by them that believe. Their tears will be forever wiped away, when he shall say to them, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world* \*.

Beloved, if these things are so, *what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness* †? Should we not give *all diligence to make our calling and election*

\* Matt. xxv. 34.

† 2 Pet. iii. 11.

*sure,*

*sure*, that we may be found of him in peace? He who will then be seated upon the throne of judgment, is, to us, made known as seated upon a throne of grace. It is time, it is high time, and blessed be God it is not yet too late, to seek his mercy. Still the gospel invites us to hear his voice, and to humble ourselves before him. Once more you are invited, some of you, perhaps, for the last time; how know you, but sickness, or death, may be at the very door? Consider, Are you prepared? Examine the foundation of your hope—and do it quickly, impartially and earnestly, lest you should be cut off in an hour when you are not aware, and perish with a lie in your right hand.

# S E R M O N    X L I I I .

DEATH SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.

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I COR. XV. 54.

*Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory!*

**D**EATH, simply considered, is no more than a privative idea, signifying a cessation of life ; or, that what was once living, lives no longer. But it has been the general, perhaps, the universal custom of mankind, to personify it. Imagination gives death a formidable appearance, arms it with a dart, sting or scythe, and represents it as an active, inexorable and invincible reality. In this view death is a great devourer ; with his iron tongue, he calls for thousands at a meal.

meal. He has already swallowed up all the preceding generations of men; all who are now living are marked as his inevitable prey; he is still unsatisfied, and will go on devouring till the Lord shall come. Then this destroyer shall be destroyed; he shall swallow no more, but be swallowed up himself, in victory. Thus the scripture accommodates itself, to the language and apprehensions of mortals. Farther the metaphorical usage of the word, *swallow*, still enlarges and aggrandizes the idea. Thus the earth is said to *have opened her mouth, and swallowed up Korah* and his accomplices\*. And thus a pebble, a mill-stone, or a mountain, if cast into the ocean, would be swallowed up, irrecoverably lost and gone, as though they had never been †. Such shall be the triumphant victory of MESSIAH, in the great day of the consummation of all things. Death, in its cause, and in its effects, shall be utterly destroyed. Man was created upright, and lived in a paradise, till, by sin, he brought death into the world. From that time, death has reigned by sin, and evils abound. But MESSIAH came to make an

\* Numb. xvi. 32.

† Rev. xviii. 21.

end

end of sin, to destroy death, and him that hath the power of it, to repair every disorder, and to remove every misery. And he will so fully, so gloriously, accomplish his great undertaking, in the final issue, that every thing contrary to holiness and happiness, shall be swallowed up, and buried, beyond the possibility of a return, as a stone that is sunk in the depths of the sea. Thus *where sin has abounded, grace will much more abound.*

This victory, however, being the Redeemer's work, and the fruit of his mediation, the scripture teaches us to restrain the benefits of it, to the subjects of his church and kingdom. *In Adam all die.* A depraved nature, guilt, sorrow and death, extend to all his posterity. The *All, who in Christ shall be made alive*, are those, who, by faith in him, are delivered from the sting of death, which is sin, and are made partakers of a new nature. There is a *second death*, which, though it shall not hurt the believers in Jesus \*, will finally swallow up the impenitent and ungodly. We live in an age, when there is, if I may so speak, a resurrection of

\* Rev. ii. 11.



many old and exploded errors, which, though they have been often refuted and forgotten, are admired and embraced, by some persons, as new and wonderful discoveries. Of this stamp, is the conceit of a universal restitution to a state of happiness, of all intelligent creatures, whether angels or men, who have rebelled against the will and government of God. This sentiment contradicts the current doctrine of scripture, which asserts the everlasting misery of the finally impenitent, in as strong terms, in the very same terms, as the eternal happiness of the righteous, and sometimes in the very same verse \*. Nor can it possibly be true, if our Lord spake the truth concerning Judas, when he said, *It had been good for that man if he had never been born †*. If I could consider this notion, as *harmless* though *useless*, and no worse than many mistakes, which men of upright minds have made, through inattention and weakness of judgment, I should not have mentioned it. But I judge it to be little less pernicious and poisonous, than false. It directly tends to abate that sense of the evil of sin, of the inflexible justice of God,

\* Matt. xxv. 46.

† Matt. xxvi. 24.

and

and the truth of his threatenings, which is but too weak in the best of men. Let us abide by the plain declarations of his word, which assures us, *that there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin*\*, no future relief against it, for those who now refuse the gospel; and that they who cordially receive it, shall be saved with an everlasting salvation, and shall one day sing, *Death is swallowed up in victory.*

I would further observe, that many prophecies have a gradual and increasing accomplishment, and may be applied to several periods; though their full completion will only be at the resurrection and last judgment. This passage, as it stands in the prophecy of Isaiah †, from whence the apostle quotes it, appears to have a reference, to the comparatively brighter light and glory of the gospel state, beyond what was enjoyed by the church, under the Levitical dispensation; and especially to the privileges of those happy days, *when the fulness of the Gentiles and the remnant of Israel shall be brought in, and the kingdoms of the world, shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ.*

\* Heb. x. 26, 27.

† Isa. xxy. 8.

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I would not exclude these subordinate senses ; I have already considered them. But my text calls our attention to the end of all things. Then, in the most emphatical sense, *Death will be swallowed up of victory.*

Let us endeavour to realize the great scene before us, to contemplate the redeemed of the Lord, when they shall return with him to animate their glorified bodies. Let us ask the question which the elder proposed to John, *Who are these clothed with white robes, and whence came they\* ? They came out of great tribulation, they were once under the power of death, but now death, as to them, is swallowed up in victory. In every sense in which death ruled over them, they are now completely delivered.*

I. They were once *dead in law.* They had revolted from their Maker. They had violated the holy order of his government, and stood exposed to his righteous displeasure, and to the heavy penalty annexed to the transgression of his commandments. But mercy interposed. *God so loved them, that he gave his only begotten Son, to make an atonement for their sins, and to be their*

\* Rev. vii. 13.

wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption\*. They received grace to believe in this Saviour, and now they are delivered from condemnation. They are *accepted in the Beloved*. They are considered as one with him, and interested in all that he did, and in all that he suffered. Now they are the children of God, and heirs of his kingdom. *Though they were afar off, they are brought nigh*, admitted into a nearer relation, than the holy angels, to him who sitteth upon the throne. For he took upon him, and still is pleased to wear, not the nature of angels, but the human nature. Their former guilt is cancelled, blotted out, and swallowed up. All their sins are covered, sunk in his precious blood, as in a deep sea, so that even if sought for, they can no more be found. That they have sinned, will always be a truth; and probably they will never lose a consciousness of what they were by nature and practice, while in this world. But this, so far from abating their joy, will heighten their gratitude and praise *to him who loved them, and washed them from their sins, in his own blood* †. Their happiness

\* 1 Cor. i. 30.

† Rev. i. 5.

principally consists, in a perception of his love to them, and in their returns of grateful love to him. *And they love him much, because, for his sake, much has been forgiven them* \*.

II. Once they were *dead in sin*. They were destitute of the knowledge and love of God. *They were foolish, deceived, and disobedient, enslaved to divers lusts †, to inordinate, sensual, unsatisfying pleasures. They lived in malice and envy, they were hateful, and they hated one another. In a word, they were dead while they lived ‡. But by the power of grace, they were awakened and raised from this death, and made partakers of a new, a spiritual and divine life. Yet the principle of sin and death still remained in them; and their life upon earth, though a life of faith in the Son of God, was a state of continual warfare. They had many a conflict, and were often greatly distressed. They sowed in tears, to the end of their pilgrimage, but now they reap in joy ||. This death is also swallowed up in victory. They are now entirely and for ever freed, from every*

\* Luke vii. 47. † Titus iii. 3. ‡ 1 Tim. v. 6.

|| Ps. cxxvii. 5.

clog, defect and defilement. By beholding their Lord, as he is, in all his glory and love, without any interposing veil or cloud, they are made like him; and to the utmost measure of their capacity, conformed to his image. Now, they are absolutely spotless and impeccable. For though mutability, seems no less essential to a creature than dependance, yet *they* cannot change, because their Lord is unchangeable, for *their life is bidden with Christ in God* \*. They cannot fall from their holiness or happiness, because he has engaged to uphold and maintain them, by his almighty power.

III. One branch of the death due to sin, is the *tyranny and power of Satan*. For a time he ruled in their hearts, as in his own strong hold; and while they were blinded by his influence, they were little affected with their bondage. Hard as his service was, they did not often complain of it. They were led by him according to his will, for the most part without resistance; or, if they attempted to resist, they found it was in vain. But in his own hour, their Lord, who had bought them, dispossessed their strong enemy, and claimed

\* Col. iii. 3.

their hearts for himself. Yet after they were thus set free from his ruling power, this adversary was always plotting and fighting against them. How much have some of them suffered from his subtle wiles, and his fiery darts! from his rage as a roaring lion, from his cunning as a serpent lying in their path, and from his attempts to deceive them under the semblance of an angel of light\*! But now they are placed out of his reach. Death and Satan are swallowed up. The victory is complete. The wicked one shall never have access to touch, or disturb them, any more. Now he is shut up in his own place, and the door sealed, no more to open. While he was permitted to vex and worry them, he acted under a limited commission which he could not exceed; all was directed and overruled, by the wisdom and love of their Lord, for their advantage. Such exercises were necessary then, to discover to them more of the weakness and vileness of their own hearts, to make them more sensible of their dependance upon their Saviour, and to afford them affecting proofs of his power and care engaged in their behalf. But they are necessary no

\* 2 Cor. xi. 14.

longer.

longer. Their warfare is finished. They are now where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest\*.

IV. While they were in the world, they had a share, many of them a very large share, of the *woes and sufferings incident to this mortal state*; which, as they are the fruits and effects of sin, and greatly contribute to shorten the life of man, and hasten his return to dust, are, as I formerly observed, properly included in the comprehensive meaning of the original sentence, *Death*. They belong to its train, and are harbingers of its approach. None of the race of Adam are exempted from these, but, especially, the servants of God have no exemption. Their gracious Lord, who frees them from condemnation, and gives them peace in himself, assures them that in this world, they shall have tribulation †. This is so inseparable from their calling, that it is mentioned as one special mark of their adoption and sonship ‡. If the prosperity of the wicked sometimes continues for a season without interruption, *their day is coming* ||; but the righteous may ex-

\* Job iii. 17. † John xvi. 33. ‡ Heb. xii. 6—8.  
|| Ps. xxxvii. 13.



pect chastisement and discipline daily. Thus their graces are refined, strengthened and displayed, to the praise of their heavenly Father. There is no promise in the Bible, that secures the most eminent and exemplary believer from participating in the heaviest calamities, in common with others; and they have many trials peculiar to themselves. Thus while upon earth, they endure hardship for his sake. Because he chose them out of the world, and they would no longer comply with its sinful maxims and customs, *the world hated them* \*. Many of them were the mark of public scorn and malice, accounted the offscouring of all things; they were driven to deserts and mountains, and caves; they suffered stripes, imprisonment and death. Others had trials of pains, sickness and poverty, of sharp bereaving dispensations. Their gourds withered, and the desire of their eyes was taken away with a stroke. They had fightings without, and fears within. So that if their pressures and troubles were considered, without taking into the account, their inward supports, and the consolation they derived from their hopes

\* John xv. 19.

beyond

beyond the grave, they might be deemed *of all men the most miserable* \*. But they were supported under these exercises, brought safely through them, and now their sorrows are swallowed up in victory. *Now, the days of their mourning are ended* †. They now confess, that their longest afflictions were momentary, and their heaviest burdens were light, in comparison of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ‡, which they have entered upon. Sorrow and sighing have taken their everlasting flight, and joy and gladness have come forth to meet them, and to dwell with them for ever ||.

V. In their collective capacity, *the seeds of sin* often produced *bitter fruits*. Through remaining ignorance and prejudice, they often mistook and misunderstood one another. They lost much good, which they might otherwise have enjoyed, and brought upon themselves many evils, through their intemperate heats, and un sanctified zeal, which divided them into little parties, and separate interests. The children of the same family, the members of the same body, were too

\* 1 Cor. xv. 19. † Isa. lx. 17. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17.  
|| Isa. li. 11.

often at variance, or at least cold and distant in their regards to each other. Yea, Satan could foment discord and jealousies among those, who lived in the same house, or met at the same table of the Lord. But now grace has triumphed over every evil; sin and death are swallowed up in victory. Now all is harmony, love and joy. They have one heart and one song, which will never more be blemished by the harshness of a single discordant note.

May this prospect animate our hopes, and awaken, in those who have hitherto been afar off, a desire of sharing in the happiness of the redeemed! Awful will be the contrast, to those who have had their portion in this world! Is it needful to address any in this auditory, in the language which our Lord used to *his* impenitent hearers? *Woe unto you that are rich; for you have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full; for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now; for ye shall mourn and weep\**! When the rich man who had lived in honour and affluence here, was torn from all that he loved, and lifted up his eyes in torment;

\* Luke vi. 24, 25.

the remembrance of his former state, that he once had *his* good things \*, but that they were gone, for ever gone, could only be a keen aggravation of his misery. Dreadful will be the condition of all who die in their sins; but the case of those, who are now frequently envied by the ignorant, in the view of a mind enlightened by the truth, must appear doubly and peculiarly pitiable. They have the most to lose, they have the most to account for. Alas, how terrible, how sudden the change! From a state of honour and influence amongst men, to fall, in a moment, under the contempt and displeasure of the holy God—to pass, from a crowd of dependants and flatterers, to the company of Satan and his angels; from grandeur and opulence, to a state of utter darkness and horror, where the worm dieth not, and the fire cannot be quenched †. These are sensible images, it is true; the things of the unseen world cannot be described to us, as they are in themselves; but we may be certain that the description, falls unspeakably short, of the reality. The malicious insults of the powers of darkness, the mutual recrimina-

\* Luke xvi. 25.

† Mark ix. 44, 46, 48.

tions of those who having been connected in sin here, will be some way connected in misery hereafter \*—remorse, rage, despair, a total and final exclusion from God the fountain of happiness, with an abiding sense of his indignation—this complicated misery cannot be expressed in the language of mortals—like the joy of the blessed, it is more than eye hath seen, or ear hath heard, or can possibly enter into the heart of man to conceive †. Add the ideas of *unchangeable*, and *eternal*, to the rest, that it will be a misery admitting of no intermission, abatement or end; and then seriously consider, what can it profit a man should he gain the whole world, if at last he should thus lose his soul ‡? No longer make a mock at sin. It is not a small evil. It is a great evil in itself, and, unless pardoned and forsaken, will be productive of tremendous consequences. No longer make light of the gospel. It points out to you the only possible method of escaping the damnation of hell. To refuse it, is to rush upon remediless destruction. No longer trust in uncertain riches. If you possess them, I need not tell you they do not

\* Matt. xiii. 30.    † 1 Cor. ii. 9.    ‡ Matt. xvi. 26.

make you happy at present, much less will they comfort you in the hour of death, or profit you in the day of wrath \*. Waste not your time and talents (which must be accounted for) in the pursuit of sensual pleasure. In the end it will bite like a serpent. For all these things God will assuredly bring you into judgment, unless, in this day of grace, you humble yourselves to implore that mercy which is still proposed to you, if you will seek it sincerely and with your whole heart; and which I once more entreat, charge and adjure you to seek, by the great name of MESSIAH, the Saviour, by his agonies and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion; by his precious death, and by the consideration of his future glorious appearance, to subdue all things to himself.

\* Prov. xi. 4.

S E R-

# S E R M O N XLIV.

TRIUMPH OVER DEATH AND THE GRAVE.

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I COR. XV. 55, 56, 57.

*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death, is sin: And the strength of sin, is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**T**HE Christian soldier may, with the greatest propriety, be said, *to war a good warfare* \*. He is engaged in a good cause. He fights under the eye of the Captain of his salvation. Though he be weak in himself, and though his enemies are many and mighty, he may do that, which, in

\* 1 Tim. i. 18.

other soldiers, would be presumption, and has often been the cause of a defeat; he may triumph, while he is in the heat of battle, and assure himself of victory, before the conflict is actually decided. For the Lord, his great Commander, fights for him, goes before him, and treads his enemies under his feet. Such a persuasion, when solidly grounded upon the promises and engagement of a faithful unchangeable God, is sufficient, it should seem, to make a coward bold. True Christians are not cowards; yet, when they compare themselves with their adversaries, they see much reason for fear and suspicion, on their own parts; but when they look to their Saviour, they are enlightened, strengthened, and comforted. They consider, who he is, what he has done; that the battle is not so much theirs, as his; that he is their strength, and their shield, and that his honour is concerned in the event of the war. Thus out of weakness, they are made strong; and however pressed and opposed, they can say, *Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us* \*! The whole power of the opposition against them,

\* Rom. viii. 37.



is summed up in the words, *sin* and *death*. But these enemies are already weakened and disarmed. It is sin that furnished death with his sting; a sting sharpened and strengthened by the law. But Jesus, by his obedience unto death, has made an end of sin, and has so fulfilled and satisfied the law on their behalf, that death is deprived of its sting, and can no longer hurt them. They may, therefore, meet it with confidence, and say, *Blessed be God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We have here, two unspeakably different views, to take of the same subject. *Death armed with its formidable sting*; and *death rendered harmless, and its aspect softened, by the removal of the sting.*

I. The first is a very awful subject. I entreat your attention. I am not now about to speak upon a point of speculation. It is a personal, a home concern, to us all. For we must all die. But should any of you feel, not only the stroke, but the sting, of death, when you leave this world, it were better for you that you had never been born.

The love of life, and consequently, a reluctance to that dissolution of the intimate  
union

union between soul and body, which we call death, seems natural to man. But if there was no hereafter, no state of judgment and retribution to be expected; if there was no consciousness of guilt, no foreboding of consequences upon the mind; if we only considered death as inevitable, and had no apprehensions beyond it, death would be divested of its principal terrors. We see that when conscience is stupified, or when the mind is poisoned with infidelity, many people, notwithstanding the natural love of life, are so disgusted with its disappointments, that a fit of impatience, or the dread of contempt, often prevail on them to rush upon death, by an act of their own will; or to hazard it in a duel, rather than be suspected of wanting, what they account, spirit. But death has a sting, though they perceive it not till they feel it; till they are stung by it past recovery.

But usually, and where the heart is not quite hardened, men are unwilling and afraid to die. They have some apprehension of the sting. Death can sting at a distance. How often, and how greatly, does the fear of death, poison and imbitter all the comforts  
of

of life, even in the time of health! Perhaps, some of you, well know this to be true. But in health, people can, in some measure, run away from themselves, if I may so speak. They fly to business, company, and amusements, to hide themselves from their own reflections. Their fears are transient, occasional, and partial; they would tremble indeed, if they knew all; or if they were steadfastly, and deliberately to contemplate, what they do know. How sin is the sting of death, is best discovered, when conscience is alarmed in a time of sickness; when the things of the world can no longer amuse, and death is approaching with hasty strides. These scenes are mostly kept secret. And, very often, they are not understood, by those who are spectators of them. Perhaps, the unhappy terrified sinner is considered as delirious, because the sting of death in his conscience, extorts from him, such confessions and complaints as he never made before. What was once slighted, as a fable, is now seen and felt, as a reality. Such cases, I am afraid, are more frequent than we are in general aware of. But they are suppressed, ascribed to the violence of

the fever, and forgotten as soon as possible. Yet they do sometimes transpire. I believe, there is no reason to doubt the truth of what we have heard, of one, who, in the horrors of despair, vainly offered his physicians many thousand pounds, to prolong his life but a single day. The relation is in print of another, who pointing to the fire in his chamber, said, If he were only to lie twenty thousand years in such a fire, he should esteem it a mercy, compared with what he felt, and with what he saw awaiting him. It is not always thus. Many persons die, insensible as they lived, and can, perhaps, trifle and jest in their last moments. But the scripture assures us, that when they who die in their sins, breathe their last in this world, they open their eyes, in the other world, in torments. For the sting of death, the desert of sin, unless timely removed by faith in Jesus, will fill the soul with anguish for ever. It derives a strength, an efficacy, and a continuance from the law.

This law, which gives strength to sin, and sharpens the sting of death, is the law of our creation, as connected with the penalty, which, God has annexed to the breach of it.

Our relation to God, as we are his creatures, requires us, according to the very nature of things, supremely to love, serve, trust, and obey him, who made us, and *in whom we live, and breathe, and have our being* \*. And our revolting from him, and living to ourselves in opposition to his will, is such an affront to his wisdom, power, authority, and goodness, as must necessarily involve misery in the very idea of it; if his perfections, the capacity of our souls, and our absolute dependance upon him, be attended to. And they must be attended to, sooner or later. Though he keep long silence, and the sinner presumes upon his patience, and *thinks him such a one as himself*, he will at length *reprove him* †, and set his sins in order before him, in contrast with the demands of his law. The nature, authority, extent, and sanction of this law, all combine to give efficacy to the sting of death.

1. The law, to which our tempers and conduct ought to be conformed, is not an *arbitrary appointment*; but necessarily results from our state as creatures, and the capacities and powers, we have received from our

\* Acts xvii. 28.

† Ps. l. 21.

Creator. It is, therefore, holy, wise, and good; indispensable, and unchangeable. To love God with all our heart and strength, to depend upon him, to conform to every intimation of his will, was the duty of man from the first moment of his existence; was the law of his nature, written originally in his heart. The republication of it, as it stands in the Bible, by precepts and prohibitions, would not have been necessary, had he continued in that state of rectitude in which he was created. It became necessary, after his fall, to restrain him from evil, and to convince him of sin; but could not properly increase his primitive obligation to obedience.

2. We are bound to the observance of this law, by the highest *authority*. It is the law of God, our Maker, Preserver, and Benefactor, who has every conceivable right to govern us. His eye is always upon us, and we are surrounded by his power, so that we can neither avoid his notice, nor escape his hand. *Men* are usually tenacious of their authority; they seldom allow their dependants, to dispute or disobey their commands with impunity. It is expected that a son

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should honour his father, and a servant his master \*. And when men have power to execute the dictates of their pride, they frequently punish disobedience with death. But how will these haughty worms, who trample upon their fellow-worms, and think they have a right to the most implicit obedience from their inferiors; how will they tremble, when they shall appear before God, who is no respecter of persons, to answer for their contempt of the authority of the sovereign Lawgiver, who, alone, is able to save or to destroy? That *we ought to obey God rather than man* †, will, perhaps, be allowed as a speculative truth; but whoever will uniformly make it the rule of his practice, must expect, upon many occasions, to be deemed a fool or a madman, by the world around him. But sovereignty, majesty, authority, and power, belong to God. He is the Governor of the universe, and his throne is established in righteousness. He is long-suffering, and waits to be gracious, but he will not forego his right. Sin is the sting of death, indeed, when the authority of him

\* Mal. i. 6.

† Acts v. 29.

against whom it was committed, is perceived by the conscience.

3. The *extent* of the law adds to the strength by which sin acts, as the sting of death. Human laws can only take cognizance of words and actions. But the law of God reaches to the thoughts and inward recesses of the heart. It condemns what is most specious and most approved amongst men, if not proceeding from a right intention, and directed to the right end, which can be no other than the will and glory of him who made us. It condemns the sinner not only for the evil which he has actually committed, but for every sinful purpose formed in his heart, and which was only rendered abortive for want of opportunity\*. It likewise takes exact notice, of every aggravation of sin, arising, from circumstances, from the abuse of superior light and advantages, and from the long train of consequences, increasing in proportion to the influence, which the rank, wealth, or extensive connections of the offender, give to his example.

\* Matt. v. 28.

4. The



4. The *sanction* of the law, which thus strengthens the malignity of sin, is the very *point*, if I may so express myself, of the *sting* of death. This is, the displeasure of the Almighty. His holy, inflexible love of order, will exclude, those who violate it, from his favour. They must be miserable, unless they are reconciled, and renewed by the grace of the gospel. They must be separated from him, and they cannot be happy without him. They are not so, even in this world, which they love. How miserable then must they be, when, torn from all their attachments, pleasures, and possessions, having no longer any thing to divert them from a fixed attention to their true state, they shall be made keenly sensible of what is implied in that sentence, *Depart from me, ye accursed, into devouring fire.* We cannot now conceive, what it will be to lose the only good which can satisfy a soul. To be shut out from God, whose favour is life, and in whose presence there is fulness of joy; and to be shut up, where neither peace nor hope can enter. The images of fire unquenchable, and a never dying worm, are but faint emblems of that despair and re-

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morse, which will sting the sinful soul in a future state. This is the second death. This is eternal death. For the wicked and all they who forget God, when thrust into hell, will for ever desire to die, and death will for ever flee from them \*.

II. Let us turn our thoughts to a more pleasing theme, and attempt to take a view of death, as softened into a privilege, by him who has brought life and immortality to light. *Jesus died.* His death was penal, he died for sin, though not for his own, and therefore suffered the penalty due to sin, the curse of the broken law. The torment and shame of his crucifixion, were preceded and accompanied by unknown agonies and conflicts, which caused him to sweat blood, and to utter strong cries and groans. Death stung him to the heart. But (as it is said of the enraged bee) he lost his sting. The law having been honoured, and sin expiated, by the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God, for us, and in our nature, death has no longer power to sting those who believe in him. They do not properly *die*, they *fall asleep* † in Jesus. To them, this last enemy acts a friendly part. He is sent to

\* Rev. ix. 6.      † Acts vii. 60.    † Thess. iv. 15.

put an end to all their sorrows, and to introduce them into a state of endless life and joy.

1. Dying believers can sing this song before their departure out of the world. We expect it, when we are called to attend them in their last hours ; and if their illness leaves them in possession of their faculties and speech, we are seldom disappointed. Yet I believe a full knowledge of this subject, cannot be collected from what we observe of others, or hear from them, when they are near death. We must be in similar circumstances ourselves, before we can see, *as they see*, or possess the ideas which they endeavour to describe, and which seem too great for the language of mortals to convey.

We know, by the evidence of undeniable testimony, that many faithful servants of God, when called to suffer for his sake, have not only been supported, but comforted, and enabled to rejoice, under the severest tortures, and even in the midst of the flames. We suppose, I think with reason, that such communications of light and power, as raise a person, in such situations, above the ordinary feelings of humanity, must, either in  
kind

kind or degree, be superior to what is usually enjoyed by Christians in the smoother walks of prosperity and outward peace. God, who is all-sufficient, and always near, has promised to give his people strength, according to their day, and in the time of trouble they are not disappointed. A measure of the like extraordinary discoveries and supports, is often vouchsafed to dying believers, and thus the gloom, which might otherwise hang over their dying hours, is dispelled; and while they contemplate the approach of death, a new world opens upon them. Even while they are yet upon earth, they stand upon the threshold of heaven. It seems, in many cases, as if the weakness of the bodily frame, gave occasion to the awakening of some faculty, till then dormant in the soul; by which, invisibles, are not only believed, but seen, and unutterables, are heard and understood.

*The soul's dark cottage tatter'd and decay'd,  
Lets in new light, through chinks—*

Instances are frequent, of those who are thus blessed, when they die in the Lord: and it does not appear, that old age, or great knowledge,

knowledge, or long experience, give any considerable advantage, in a dying hour; for when the heart is truly humbled for sin, and the hope solidly fixed upon the Saviour, persons of weak capacities and small attainments, yea, novices and children, are enabled to meet death with equal fortitude and triumph. And often, the present comforts they feel, and their lively expectations of approaching glory, inspire them with a dignity of sentiment and expression, far beyond what could be expected from them; and, perhaps, their deportment, upon the whole, is no less animating and encouraging, than that of the most established, and best informed believers. Thus *out of the mouths of babes and sucklings the Lord ordains strength, and perfects his praise* \*. In a few hours, under the influence of his immediate teaching, they often learn more, of the certainty and importance of divine things, than can be derived from the ordinary methods of instruction, in the course of many years. In the midst of agonies and outward distress, we hear them, with admiration, declare that they are truly happy, and that they never knew pleasure

\* Ps. viii. 2.

in their happiest days of health, equal to what they enjoy when flesh and heart are fainting. For death has lost its sting, as to them; and while they are able to speak, they continue ascribing praise to him, *who has given them the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ*. Every word, in this doxology, is emphatical.

1. *Thanks be to God*. This blessedness is all his work. The means are of his gracious appointment. The application is by his gracious power. He gave his Son for them, he sent his gospel to them. It was the agency of his Spirit that made them a willing people. The word of promise, which is the ground of their hope, was of his gratuitous providing, and it was he who constrained and enabled them to trust in it\*.

2. *Who giveth us the victory*. This is victory indeed: for it is over the last enemy; and after the last enemy is vanquished, there can be no more conflicts. In this sense, believers are more than conquerors. In other wars, they who have conquered once and again, may have been finally defeated, or they may have died (like our long lamented

\* Pf. cxix. 49.



General Wolfe) upon the field of battle, and have left the fruits of their victory to be enjoyed by others. But the Christian soldier, though he may, occasionally, be a loser in a skirmish, is sure to conquer in the last great deciding battle; and when, to an eye of sense, he seems to fall, he is instantly translated, to receive the plaudit of his Commander, and the crown of life which he has prepared for them that love him.

3. This victory is *through our Lord Jesus Christ*. They gained it not by their own sword, neither was it their own arm that saved them \*. He died to deliver them, who would otherwise, through fear of death, have been always subject to bondage. And it is he who teaches their hands to war, and their fingers to fight, and covers their heads in the day of battle. Therefore they gladly say, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, be the glory and the praise †*. And this consideration enhances their pleasure; for because they love him above all, they rejoice not only in the victory they obtain, but in the thought that they are indebted to him for it. For were it possible

\* Ps. xlv. 3.

† Ibid. cxv. 1.

there

there could be several methods of salvation, and they were left to their own choice, they would, most gladly and deliberately, chuse that method, which should bring them under the greatest obligations to him.

2. This triumphant song will be sung to the highest advantage, when the whole body of the redeemed shall be collected together to sing it with one heart and voice, at the great resurrection day. Lot was undoubtedly thankful, when he was snatched from the impending destruction of Sodom. Yet, his lingering \* shewed, that he had but an imperfect sense of the greatness of the mercy afforded him. His feelings were probably stronger afterwards, when he stood in safety upon the mountain, and actually saw the smoke rising, like the smoke of a furnace, from the place where he had lately dwelt. At present, we have but very faint ideas of the misery from which we are delivered, of the happiness reserved in heaven for us, or of the sufferings of the Redeemer; but if we attain to the heavenly Zion, and see, from thence, the smoke of that bottomless pit,

\* Gen. xix. 16.

which

which might justly have been our everlasting abode; we shall then more fully understand what we are delivered from, the means of our deliverance, and the *riches of the inheritance of the saints in light*. And then we shall sing, in more exalted strains than we can at present even conceive of, *Thanks be to God who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

# S E R M O N XLV.

DIVINE SUPPORT AND PROTECTION.

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ROM. viii. 31.

*[What shall we say then to these things?] If  
God be for us, who can be against us?*

**T**H E passions of joy or grief, of admiration or gratitude, are moderate, when we are able to find words which fully describe their emotions. When they rise very high, language is too faint to express them; and the person is either lost in silence, or feels something, which, after his most laboured efforts, is too big for utterance. We may often observe the apostle Paul under this difficulty, when attempting to excite in others, such sensations as filled his own heart, while contemplating the glories and blessings of

the gospel. Little verbal critics, who are not animated by his fervour, are incapable of entering into the spirit of his writings. They coldly examine them by the strictness of grammatical rules, and think themselves warranted to charge him with solecisms, and improprieties of speech. For it must be allowed, that he sometimes departs from the usual forms of expression; invents new words, or at least compounds words for his own use, and heaps one hyperbole upon another. But there is a beautiful energy in his manner, far superior to the frigid exactness of grammarians, though the taste of a mere grammarian, is unable to admire or relish it. When he is stating the advantage of being with Christ, as beyond any thing that can be enjoyed in the present life, he is not content with saying, as his expression is rendered in our version, *It is far better*\*. In the Greek, another word of comparison is added, which, if our language would bear the literal translation, would be, *Far more better*, or, *Much more better*. And when he would describe the low opinion he had of himself, great as his attainments were in our

\* Phil. i. 23.

view, he thinks it not sufficient to style himself, *The least of all saints*, but *less than the least* \*. Such phrases do not imply that he was ignorant of the rules of good writing, but they strongly intimate the fulness of his heart. In the course of the chapter before us, having taken a rapid survey of the work of grace, carried on, by successive steps, in the hearts of believers, till at length consummated in glory; in this verse, instead of studying for words answerable to his views, he seems to come to a full stop, as sensible that the strongest expressions he could use, would be too faint. He makes an abrupt transition from describing, to admiring. He has said much, but not enough. And therefore sums up all, with, *What shall we say to these things?* Surely they who can read, with the utmost coolness and indifference, what he could not write, without rapture and astonishment, do not take his words in his sense. If the apostle's phraseology, is now become obsolete, and sounds uncouth in the ears of too many who would be thought christians, is there not too much reason to fear that they are christians only in name?

\* Eph. iii. 8.

Though this short lively question, is omitted in the musical composition, I am not willing to leave it out. It stands well, as a sequel to what we have lately considered. The sting of death is taken away. Death itself is swallowed up in victory. Sinners, who were once burdened with guilt and exposed to condemnation, obtain a right to sing, *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ—What shall we say to these things?*

It stands well likewise, as introducing the following question. If God be for us; if his promises, his power, his wisdom, and his love, be all engaged on our behalf, who can be against us? *What shall we, or can we, or need we say more than this? What cause can we have for fear, or our enemies for triumph, if God be for us?*

We may consider,

I. What is implied in the supposition?

II. The meaning of the inference.

I. The form of the question is *hypothetical*. If the assumption be right, that God is for us; the conclusion, that none can be effectually against us, is infallibly sure. Many serious persons will allow, that if God be  
indeed

indeed for them, all must, and will be well, in the end. But they hesitate at the *if*, and are ready to ask, How shall I know that God is for me? I would offer you a few considerations towards the determining of this point, in the first place.

Sin has made an awful breach and separation between God and mankind. *They* are alienated in their minds from *him*, and *he* is justly displeas'd with *them*. The intercourse and communion with God, which constitute the honour and happiness of the human nature, were no longer either afforded or desired, when man rebelled against his Maker; except to the few who understood and embraced his gracious purpose of reconciliation, the first intimation of which, was revealed in the promise of the *seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head* \*. The clear and full discovery of this reconciliation, is made known to us, by the gospel. *God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself* †. God is already reconciled, in this sense, that having provided and accepted a satisfaction to his law and justice, he can now, in a way worthy of himself, receive and pardon the

\* Gen. iii. 15.

† 2 Cor. v. 19,



returning sinner. And he accompanies the word of his grace, with the power of his holy Spirit, to make sinners willing to be reconciled to him. If we be for God, he is assuredly for us. If we seek him, he has been before hand with us, for, in the first instance, he is always *found of those who sought him not* \*. If we love him, it is, because he first loved us. True believers walk with God. *But two cannot walk together, with confidence and comfort, unless they be agreed* †. This agreement is chiefly with respect to those particulars, proposed by the Lord God in his word, and to which, the believing sinner cheerfully and thankfully accedes.

1. *In the ground of the agreement*; this is MESSIAH, the Mediator between God and man. When he entered upon his office, a voice from heaven, commended him to sinners, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased* ‡. And they who are enlightened to behold the glory of God in his person and engagement, accept him as the beloved Saviour, in whom, and with whom, they are well pleased. Without this ac-

\* Isa. lxxv. 1.      † Amos iii. 3.      ‡ Matt. iii. 17.

ceptance

ceptance of the Mediator, there can be no agreement. Jesus is the only door, the only way, of a sinner's access to the knowledge and favour of God. This is the precious and sure foundation which he has laid in Zion \*; and to presume to build our hope upon any other, is to build upon a quicksand. In this point, reason, in its present distempered state, would lead us, if followed, directly contrary to the simplicity of faith. Reason suggests, that if we have acted wrong, we must repent and amend, and what can we do more? But the law against which we have sinned, makes no provision for repentance. Nor is such a repentance, as includes a change of heart (and nothing short of this deserves the name) in our own power. *Repentance unto life* †, is the gift of God; and Jesus who is exalted *to be a Prince and a Saviour* ‡, bestows it upon those who acknowledge him, and implore it of him. But God will only treat with us, as those who are condemned already, who have nothing but sin, and deserve nothing but misery. When we feel this to be our proper state, we are referred to Jesus, in whom God is well pleased; and for whose

\* 1 Pet. ii. 6.      † Acts xi. 18.      ‡ Ibid. v. 31.

sake, sins are pardoned, and sinners accepted and justified, without condition, and without exception. And then likewise we begin to see the necessity, propriety and sufficiency of this appointment. Herein all who are taught of God are of one mind. However they may differ in some respects, they agree in cordially *receiving Christ Jesus the Lord\**, as he is made of God for us, *wisdom, righteousness, and salvation.*

2. They agree with God *in the great design of the gospel*, which is, to purify unto himself a peculiar people, who, being delivered from their fears and their enemies, shall serve him with an unreserved and persevering obedience †. A deliverance from the power of sin and Satan, a devotedness to God, and a conformity to the mind and pattern of his dear Son, are included by every true believer, in the idea of salvation. He knows that he can be happy in no other way. This is a turning point. There are convictions of sin, excited by a dread of punishment, which, though distressing to the conscience, leave the heart and affections unchanged. They who are thus impressed, if no farther, would

\* Col. ii. 6.

† Luke i. 74, 75.

be satisfied with an assurance of pardon. But *the grace of God which bringeth salvation* \*, teaches us to renounce, to abhor *all ungodliness in the present world*; to give themselves unto him *who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; and to walk worthy of God who calls us to his kingdom and glory* †. *This is the will of God; even our sanctification.* And this is the desire of his people, that they may be sanctified wholly; that their whole persons, spirit, soul and body, may be preserved blameless; that they may be filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ; that they may walk as the sons of God, without rebuke, and shine as lights in the world ‡. Though their attainments are imperfect, in their judgment and desires they are fully agreed with God, as to their aim and design.

3. They are agreed with him likewise as to the ultimate *great end, the final cause of their redemption*, which is, *the praise of the glory of his grace* ||. That the loftiness, high looks, and proud pretences of men, may be abased, and the Lord alone may be exalted; *and that he who glorieth, may glory only in*

\* Tit. ii. 11, 12. † 1 Thes. ii. 12. ‡ Phil. ii. 15.  
 || Eph. i. 6.

*the Lord*\*. Salvation is of the Lord, in every sense; the plan, the price, the power, the application, the consummation. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the author and the object of it. The praise therefore is wholly due to him, and he claims it. To this claim his people fully consent. It is the desire of their souls, that his name, which alone is excellent, may alone be extolled. And with one heart and voice they say, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thee, be all the glory, and all the praise †!*

If we truly understand and approve these things, then we are certainly engaged for God, and of course, he is for us. For he alone could either enable us to see them in their true light, or incline our hearts to embrace them. Who then can be against us?

II. We are not to understand the question, *Who can be against us?* as designed to encourage us to expect, that they who have the Lord on their side, will meet with no opposition; but that all opposition against them will be in vain.

I. They whom God is for, will, on that very account, have many opposers.

\* 1 Cor. i. 31.

† Ps. cxv. 1.

1. *The men of the world.* This our Lord expressly teaches us to expect. *If ye were of the world, the world would love its own. But because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you* \*. And his apostle, *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you* †. Till we declare for him, the world will bear with us, but no longer: as the Gibeonites were in a state of honour and friendship with the neighbouring cities, till they submitted to Joshua ‡; but when they obtained peace from him, they were immediately involved in war with their former friends. While Saul persecuted the church, the world smiled upon him, and he seemed to be, as we say, in the way of preferment. But when he yielded himself to the service of Christ, and his defection from the common cause became generally known, bonds and afflictions awaited him in every place; and they who before had employed and caressed him, sought his life. I do not mean to sound a trumpet of defiance. I believe that young converts, by their warm, but injudicious zeal, often more than is necessary, provoke the spirit of the

\* John xv. 19. † 1 John iii. 14. ‡ Joshua x. 1—4.  
world,

world, and thereby increase their own difficulties. The gospel, when rightly understood, inspires a spirit of benevolence, and directs to a conduct, which is suited to conciliate goodwill and esteem. And when the apostle exhorts us, *If it be possible, and as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men\**, he gives us hope that much may be done, to soften prejudices, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and to make them at least ashamed, by a patient perseverance in well-doing. A consistent christian, whose integrity, humility and philanthropy, mark his character, and adorn his profession, will, in time, command respect; but his attachment to unfashionable truths, and his separation from the maxims and pursuits of the many, will render him, in their eyes, singular and precise, weak and enthusiastic. If they say, "He is a good sort of man, but "has some strange peculiarities," it is the most favourable judgment he can hope for; and from some persons, and at some times, he will meet with tokens of a settled dislike, For though a religious character *may* be formed, which even *the world* will approve,

\* Rom. xii. 18.

yet *all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution* \*. They walk in the midst of observers, who watch for their halting, who lay snares for their feet, and will endeavour to bribe or intimidate them, to forsake the path of duty. It is difficult to stem the torrent, or to avoid the infection of the world; and to live superior to the fear of man, as becomes us, if we know whose we are, and whom we serve. But though difficult, it is practicable and attainable, and actually attained by believers; *for this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith* †.

2. *The powers of darkness.* Satan will not, ordinarily, trouble, while he bears rule. He is indeed an enemy to his own servants, and seeks their destruction, both soul and body, by pushing them on in sin, which, if persisted in, will prove their ruin; but while they make no resistance, he gives them no disturbance. It is otherwise with those whom the Lord has freed from his bondage. He will pursue them, *like a lion seeking his prey* ‡, and lie in wait for them like a serpent in the

\* 2 Tim. iii. 12.      † 1 John v. 4.      ‡ 1 Pet. v. 8.  
path.



path. This is one cause of the world's hatred; for the scripture styles him *the god of this world*\*, and he sets all that he can influence, tongues, and pens, and swords, against those who are on the Lord's side. Therefore the people of God may be known by two marks. Satan, by himself and by his instruments, fights against them. And they also fight against him. The former, without the latter, is not conclusive. A mere outward profession of religion may excite opposition, and mere pretenders may take pleasure in it for a time, if it does not come too close. It may feed their vanity, and give them a sort of consequence, by having sufferings to talk of. But I would entreat my hearers, seriously to examine, Is your heart really set against sin, which is the strength of Satan's kingdom? Are you against his will and interest in the world? Have you renounced his service? If so, fear not. God is for you, and none can harm you. For,

II. No opposition can prevail against us, if God be for us. It is impossible to deny, or even to doubt, this truth, upon the prin-

\* 2 Cor. iv. 4.

ciples of reason. For who, or what, can injure those who are under the protection of Omnipotence? And yet it is not always easy to maintain the persuasion of it in the mind, and to abide in the exercise of faith, when, to an eye of sense, all things *seem* against us. But though we believe not, he continueth faithful, and will not forsake those whom he once enables to put their trust in him. Job was a faithful and approved servant of God, yet, for a season, his trials were great, and his confidence was sometimes shaken. But he was supported, and at length delivered. There are many instances recorded in scripture, to confirm our faith, and to teach us, that God manifests himself to be for his people, and, in different ways, renders them superior to all their difficulties and enemies.

At one time, he prevents the threatened danger. They only see it, or expect it, for he is better to them than their apprehensions and fears. Thus when Sennacherib was furious against Jerusalem, and supposed he could easily prevail, he was not suffered to come near it \*. When he thought to de-

\* Isa. xxxvii. 29, 33.

stroy it, he felt a hook and a bridle which he could not resist, and was compelled to retire disappointed and ashamed.

At another time the enemies go a step farther. His people are brought into trouble, but God is with them, and they escape unhurt. So Daniel, though he was cast into the den of lions \*, received no more harm from them, than if he had been among a flock of sheep. He permitted three of his servants to be thrown into a furnace of fire, but he restrained the violence of the flames, so that not even a hair of their heads was singed †.

The most that opposers can do is to kill the body ‡. If God permits his people to be thus treated, still they are not forsaken. Their death is precious in his sight ||. They who die in the Lord, are blessed. They are highly honoured, who are called and enabled to die for him. If he is pleased to comfort them with his presence, and then to take them home to himself, they can desire no more. Stephen, though apparently given

\* Dan. vi. 23.

† Dan. iii. 27.

‡ Luke xii. 4.

|| Pf. cxvi. 15.

up to the power of his adversaries, and cruelly stoned to death, was no less happy than those who die in composure upon their beds, with their friends around them. Nor was he less composed. For the heavens were opened to him, and he saw his Saviour in glory, approving his fidelity, and ready to receive his spirit\*.

In brief, whatever men or devils may attempt against us, there are three things, which, if we are true believers, they cannot do. They may be helpful to wean us from the world; they may add earnestness to our prayers; they may press us to greater watchfulness and dependance; they may afford fair occasions of evidencing our sincerity, the goodness of our cause, and the power of that God who is for us.—Such are the benefits, that the Lord teaches his people to derive from their sufferings, for he will not let them suffer, or be oppressed in vain. But no enemy can deprive us of the love with which God favours us, or the grace which he has given us, or the glory which he has prepared for us. *Now what shall we say to these things?*

\* Acts vii. 56—60.

Alas, there are too many, who say, at least in their hearts, (for their conduct betrays their secret thoughts) we care but little about them. If they were to speak out, they might adopt the language of the rebellious Jews to the prophet, *As to the words which thou hast spoken to us, in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth* \*. And there are others who plainly say, Let us then continue in sin that grace may abound. They do not so expressly reject the gospel, as take encouragement from it, to go on in their wickedness. The case of the former is very dangerous, that of the latter is still worse. But grace, though long slighted, though often abused, is once more proclaimed in your hearing. The Lord forbid, that you should perish with the sound of salvation in your ears!

At present, and while you persist in your impenitence and unbelief, I may reverse the words of my text. Oh, consider, I beseech you, before it be too late, *If God be against you, who can be for you?* Will your com-

\* Jerem. xliv. 16, 17.

panions comfort you in a dying hour? Will your riches profit you in the day of wrath? Will the recollection of your sinful pleasures, give you confidence to stand before this great and glorious Lord God, when you shall be summoned to appear at his tribunal. May you be timely wise, and *flee for refuge to the hope set before you!*

# S E R M O N XLVI.

A C C U S E R S C H A L L E N G E D.

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ROM. viii. 33.

*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.*

**T**HOUGH the collating of manuscripts and various readings, has, undoubtedly, been of use, in rectifying some mistakes, which, through the inadvertency of transcribers, had crept into different copies of the New Testament; yet such supposed corrections of the text, ought to be admitted with caution, and not unless supported by strong reasons, and good authorities. The whole scripture is given by inspiration of God; and they who thankfully receive it as *his book*, will not trifle with it, by substi-

tuting bold conjectural alterations, which, though *they* may deem to be amendments, may possibly disguise, or alter, the genuine sense of the passage. Some fancied emendations might be pointed out, suggested by very learned men, which do not seem to afford so strong a proof of the sound judgment of the proposers, as of their vanity and rashness. Let the learned men be as ingenious as they please, in correcting and amending the text of Horace, or Virgil, for it is of little importance to us, whether their criticisms be well founded or not, but let them treat the pages of divine revelation with reverence.

But the pointing of the New Testament, though it has a considerable influence upon the sense, is of inferior authority. It is a human invention, very helpful, and, for the most part, I suppose, well executed. But in some places, it may admit of real amendment. The most ancient manuscripts are without points, and some of them, are even without a distinction of the words. With the pointing, therefore, we may take more liberty than with the text; though even this liberty should be used soberly. A change in



the pointing of this verse, and the following, will not alter the received sense; but, as some critics judge, will make it more striking and emphatical. If two clauses should be read with an interrogation, instead of a period, the apostle's triumphant challenge, may be expressed in the following brief paraphrase.

*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Shall God himself? So far from it, it is he who justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ? Nay, he loves them and accepts them. Shall he who died for them, yea rather who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, on their behalf, who also maketh intercession for them? There is not the least ground to fear, that he who has promised to justify them, will lay any thing to their charge; or that he will condemn them, who died to deliver them from condemnation. Nor can any charge of their enemies prevail to the condemnation of those, whom God is pleased to justify, and for whom Christ died, and now intercedes before the throne.*

The death, the resurrection, and ascension of MESSIAH, we have already considered. I shall speak only to two points, from this verse.

I. The title here given to believers, *God's elect*.

II. Their great privilege, they are justified, *It is God who justifieth* them.

I. The persons who will be finally justified by God, are here styled, his *elect*. Very near and strong is the connection between peace and truth. Yet a mistaken zeal for truth, has produced many controversies, which have hurt the peace of the people of God among themselves; and at the same time, have exposed them to the scorn and derision of the world. On the other hand, a pretended, or improper, regard for peace, has often been prejudicial to the truth. But that peace, which is procured at the expence of truth, is too dearly purchased. Every branch of doctrine, belonging to the faith once delivered to the saints, is not equally plain to every believer. Some of these doctrines, the apostle compares to milk, the proper and necessary food for babes\*; others, to strong meat, adapted to a more advanced state in the spiritual life, when experience is more enlarged, and the judgment more established. The Lord, the great teacher, leads his children on gradually, from the plainer

\* Heb. v. 13, 14.

to the more difficult truths, as they are able to bear them. But human teachers are often too hasty, they do not attend sufficiently to the weakness of young converts, but expect them to learn and receive every thing at once; they are not even content with offering strong meat, prematurely, to babes, but force upon them the *bones* of subtleties, distinctions, and disputations. But though a judicious minister, will endeavour to accommodate himself to the state of his hearers, no gospel truth, is to be tamely and voluntarily suppressed, from a fear of displeasing men. In fact, however, the controversies which have obtained among real Christians, have not so much affected the truth as it lies in the scripture, as the different explanations, which fallible men, of warm passions, and too full of their own sense, have given of it. They who professedly hold and avow the doctrine of an election of grace, are now called *Calvinists*; and the name is used, by some persons, as a term of reproach. They would insinuate that Calvin invented the doctrine; or at least, that he borrowed it from Austin, who, according to them, was the first of the Fathers that held it. It is  
enough

enough for me, that I find it in the New Testament. But many things advanced upon the subject by later writers, I confess I do not find there. If any persons advance harsh assertions, not warranted by the word of God, I am not bound to defend them. But as the doctrine itself is plainly taught, both by our Lord and his apostles, and is of great importance, when rightly understood, to promote the humiliation, gratitude, and comfort of believers, I think it my duty to state it as plainly as I can. I shall offer my view of it, in a series of propositions, so evidently founded (as I conceive) on acknowledged principles of scripture, that they cannot be easily controverted by any persons who have a real reverence for the word of God, and any due acquaintance with their own hearts.

I. All mankind are sinners \*, by nature and practice. Their lives are stained with transgressions, their hearts are depraved, their minds blinded, and alienated from God. So that they are not sensible either of their guilt, or their misery; nor so much as desirous of returning to God, till he pre-

\* Rom. iii. 23.

vents them with his mercy, and begins to draw their hearts towards himself. Were I to prove this at large, I might transcribe one half of the Bible. Nay, it is fully proved by experience and observation. The Heathens felt and confessed it. My present subject does not require me to account for it, or to reason upon it. That it is so, I appeal to fact.

II. The inestimable gift of a Saviour, to atone for sin, and to mediate between God and man \*; that there might be a way opened for the communication of mercy to sinners, without prejudice to the honour of the perfections and government of God—this gift was the effect of his own rich grace and love †, no less unthought of, and undesired, than undeserved, by fallen man.

III. Wherever this love of God to man, is made known by the gospel, there is encouragement, and a command given to *all men every where to repent ‡*. The manifestation of the eternal Word, in the human nature, and his death upon the cross, are spoken of as the highest display of the wisdom and goodness of God. Designed to give

\* John iii. 16. † Rom. v. 6, 8. ‡ Acts xvii. 30, 31.

us, in one and the same transaction, the most affecting sense of the evil of sin, and the strongest assurance imaginable, that there is forgiveness with God \*.

IV. Men, while blinded by pride and prejudice, enslaved to sinful passions, and under the influence of this present evil world, neither can, nor will receive the truth in the love of it †. They are prepossessed, and pre-engaged. This, at least, is evidently the case with many people in this favoured nation. Who, when the gospel is proposed to them in the most unexceptionable manner, not only disregard, but treat it with a pointed contempt and indignation ‡. Such was its reception at the beginning, and we are not to wonder, therefore, that it is so at this day.

V. As all mankind spring from one stock, there are not two different sorts of men by nature; consequently they who receive the gospel, are no better in themselves ||, than they are who reject it. The apostle, writing to the believers at Corinth, having enumerated a catalogue, in which he comprizes some of the most flagitious and infamous cha-

\* Rom. iii. 24, 25. † 2 Cor. iv. 4. John vi. 55.  
v. 40. ‡ Luke iv. 28, 29. Acts xvii. 18. || Eph. ii. 3.  
raeters,

acters \*, and allowed to be so by the common consent of mankind ; adds, *Such were some of you.* Surely it cannot be said, that they who had degraded themselves, below the brutes, by their abominable practices, were better disposed, than others, to receive that gospel, which is not more distinguished by the sublimity of its doctrine, than by the purity and holiness of conversation which it enjoins !

VI. It seems, therefore, at least highly probable, that all men universally, if left to themselves, would act as the majority do to whom the word of salvation is sent ; that is, they would reject and despise it. And it is undeniable, that some, who in the day of God's power, have cordially received the gospel, did for a season oppose it with no less pertinacity, than any of those who have continued to hate and resist it, to the end of life. Saul of Tarsus was an eminent instance †. He did not merely slight the doctrine of a crucified Saviour ; but, according to his mistaken views, thought himself bound in conscience to suppress those who embraced it. He breathed out threat-

\* 1 Cor. vi, 9—11.

† Acts ix, 1.

nings and slaughter, and, as he expresses it himself, *was exceedingly mad against them* \*, and made havock of them. His mind was filled with this bitter and insatiable rage, at the moment when the Lord Jesus appeared to him in his way to Damascus. Is it possible that a man thus disposed, should suddenly become a preacher of the faith which he had long laboured to destroy, if his heart and views had not been changed by a supernatural agency? Or that the like prejudices in other persons, can be removed in any other manner?

VII. If all men had heard the gospel in vain, *then Christ would have died in vain*. But this is prevented by the covenanted office and influence of the holy Spirit †, who accompanies the word with his energy, and makes it the power of God to the salvation of those who believe. He prepares the minds of sinners, and, as in the case of Lydia ‡, *opens their hearts to understand and receive the truth, in the love of it*.

VIII. But who will presume to say, that when God was pleased to make a proposal of mercy to a race of rebels, he was likewise

\* Acts xxvi. 11. † John xvi. 8. ‡ Acts xvi. 14.



bound to overcome the obstinacy of men, in every case, and to compel them to accept it by an act of his invincible power? If he does thus interpose in favour of some, it is an act of free mercy, to which they have no claim. For if we had a claim, the benefit would be an act of *justice*, rather than of *mercy*. May not the great Sovereign of the world *do what he will with his own* \*? And nothing is more peculiarly and eminently his own than his mercy. Yes, we are assured, that *he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy* †, and whom he will, he may justly leave to be hardened, in their impenitence and unbelief. We have all deserved to be so left; but he, as the potter over the clay, has power and right, to make a difference, as it seemeth good in his sight. *And who will say unto him, What doest thou* ‡?

IX. When sinners are effectually called by the gospel, then they are visibly chosen out of the world ||, in the spirit and tempers of which they before lived, disobedient and deceived, even as others. *Old things pass away, and all things become new* §. Their

\* Matt. xx. 15.    † Rom. ix. 18.    ‡ Job. ix. 12.  
 || John xv. 19.    § 2 Cor. v. 17.

hopes and fears, their companions and pleasures, their pursuits and aims, are all changed. The change in these respects is so evident, that they are soon noticed and marked, pitied or derided, by those from whom they are now separated. And I think they who really experience this change, will willingly ascribe it to the grace of God.

X. But if they are thus chosen in *time*, it follows of course, that they were chosen from *everlasting*. Both these expressions, when applied to this subject, amount to the same thing; and the seeming difference between them, is chiefly owing to our weakness and ignorance. To the infinite and eternal God, our little distinctions of past, present, and future, are nothing. We think unworthily of the unchangeable Jehovah, and liken him too much to ourselves, if we suppose that he can form a new purpose. If it be his pleasure to convert a sinner to-day, he had the same gracious design in favour of that sinner yesterday, at the day of his birth, a thousand years before he was born, and a thousand ages (to speak according to our poor conceptions) before the world began. For that mode of duration which we call

*time,*

*time, has no respect to him who inhabiteth eternity* \*.

With regard to those who reject the declaration of the mercy of God; who, though called and invited by the gospel, and often touched by the power of his holy Spirit, will not come to the Saviour for life, but persist in their determination to go on in their sins, their ruin is not only unavoidable, but just in the highest degree. And though, like the wicked servant in the parable †, they cavil against the Lord, their mouths will be stopped ‡, when he shall at length appear, to plead with them, face to face. Then their cobweb excuses will fail them, and the proper ground of their condemnation will be, that when he sent them light, they turned from it, *and chose darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil* ||.

II. The great privilege of the *elect*, comprehensive of every blessing, is, that *they are justified*; finally and authoritatively justified, from all that can possibly be laid to their charge, for it is God himself who justifieth them.

\* Isa. lvii. 15. † Matt. xxv. 24. ‡ Rom. iii. 19.  
|| John iii. 19.

The justification of a sinner before God, by faith in the obedience and atonement of Christ, is considered by many persons, in these days of refinement, in no better light, than as a branch of a scholastic theology, which is now exploded as uncouth and obsolete. At the Reformation, it was the turning point between the Protestants and Papists. Luther deemed it the criterion of a flourishing, or a falling church; that is, he judged the church would always be, in a thriving or a declining state, in proportion as the importance of this doctrine was attended to. How important it appeared to our English reformers, many of whom sealed their testimony to it with their blood, may be known by the writings of Cranmer, Latimer, Philpot, and others; and by the articles of the church of England, which are still of so much authority, by law, that no person can be admitted into holy orders amongst us, till he has declared and subscribed his assent to them. But I hope never to preach a doctrine to my hearers, which needs the names and authority of men, however respectable, for its support. *Search the scriptures* \*, and judge by them of the im-

\* John v. 39.

portance

portance of this doctrine. Judge of it by the text now before us. The apostle speaks of it, as sufficient to silence every charge, to free from all condemnation, and inseparably connected with eternal life. For *those whom God justifies he will also glorify* \*. Though volumes have been written upon the subject, I think it may be explained in few words. Every one must give an account of himself to God; and the judgment will proceed according to the tenor of his holy word. *By the law, no flesh can be justified, for all have sinned* †. But they who believe the gospel will be *justified from all things* ‡, for which the law would otherwise condemn them. And, as *they who believe not are condemned already* ||; so believers are already *justified by faith, and have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ* §, in the present life. They plead guilty to the charge of the law. But they can likewise plead, that they renounce all hope and righteousness in themselves, and upon the warrant of the word of promise, put their whole trust in Jesus, as *the end of the law for righteous-*

\* Rom. viii. 30. † Rom. iii. 19, 20. ‡ Acts xiii. 39.  
 || John iii. 18. § Rom. v. 1.

*ness to every one that believeth* \*. And this plea is accepted. *To him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness* †, and his sins are no more remembered against him ‡.

This justification, in its own nature, is authoritative, complete, and final. It is an act of God's mercy, which, because founded upon the mediation of Jesus, may, with no less truth, be styled an act of his justice, whereby the believing sinner, is delivered from the curse of the law, from the guilt and power of sin, and is *translated into the kingdom of his dear Son* ||. It includes the pardon of all sin, and admission to the state of a child of God—It is a *passing from death unto life* §. By faith of the operation of God, the sinner once afar off, is brought nigh, is accepted in the Beloved, and becomes one with him, as the branch is united to the vine, and the members with the head \*\*. The sanctification of a believer is imperfect and gradual, but his justification, in this sense, from the moment when he begins to live a life of faith in the Son of God, is perfect and incapable

\* Rom. x. 4.      † Rom. iv. 4.      ‡ Heb. viii. 12.  
 § Col. i. 13.      § John v. 24.      \*\* John xv. 15.

of increase. The principle of life, in a new born infant, and the privilege dependent upon his birth (if he be the heir of a great family,) are the same from the first hour, as at any future time. He is stronger as he grows up to the stature of a man, but is not more alive; he grows up likewise more into the knowledge and enjoyment of his privileges, but his right to them admits of no augmentation; for he derives it not from his years, or his stature, or his powers, but from the relation in which he stands, as a child to his father. Thus it is with those who are born from above. They are, immediately, the children and heirs of God, though, for a time, like minors, while under age, they may seem to *differ but little from servants*\*, and it doth not yet appear what they shall be.

But though justification, in the sight of God, be connected with the *reality* of faith, the comfortable perception of it in our own consciences, is proportionable to the *degree* of faith. In young converts, therefore, it is usually weak. They are well satisfied that Jesus is the only Saviour, and they have no

\* Gal. iv. 1, 2.

doubt of his ability and sufficiency in that character, in favour of those who put their trust in him. But they are suspicious and jealous of themselves ; they are apprehensive of something singular in their own case, which may justly exclude them from his mercy ; or they fear that they do not believe aright. But the weakest believer is a child of God ; and true faith, though at first like a grain of mustard-seed, is interested in all the promises of the gospel. If it be true, it will grow \*, it will attain to a more simple dependance upon its great object, and will work its way through a thousand doubts and fears (which, for a season, are not without their use) till at length, the weak Christian becomes strong in faith, *strong in the Lord*, and is enabled to say, *I know whom I have believed † !* Who shall lay any thing to my charge ? Who shall condemn ? It is God who justifieth. It is Christ who died for me and rose again.

But especially at the great day, the Lord the Judge, shall ratify their justification, publickly before assembled worlds. Then

\* Mark iv. 26.

† 2 Tim. i. 12.



*every tongue that riseth in judgment against them \* shall be put to silence. Then Satan will be utterly confounded, and many who despised them on earth, will be astonished and say—These are they whose lives we accounted madness, and their end to be without honour! How are they numbered among the children of God †!*

The right knowledge of this doctrine, is a source of abiding joy; it likewise animates love, zeal, gratitude, and all the noblest powers of the soul, and produces a habit of cheerful and successful obedience to the whole will of God. But it may be, and too often is, misunderstood, and abused. If you receive it by divine teaching, it will fill you *with those fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God ‡.* But if you learn it only from men and books, if you are content with the notion of it in your head, instead of the powerful experience of it in your heart, it will have a contrary effect. Such a lifeless form, even of the truth itself, will probably make you heady and high-minded,

\* Isa. liv. 17. † Wisdom v. 4, 5. ‡ Phil. i. 11.

cenforious of others, trifling in your spirit, and unfettled in your conduct. Oh! be afraid of refembling the foolifh virgins \*, of having the lamp of your profeffion expire in darknefs, for want of the oil of grace. Left when the Bridegroom cometh, you fhould find the door fhut againft you.

\* Matt. xxv. 1—12.

# S E R M O N XLVII.

## THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

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ROM. viii. 34.

*Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

**T**HE redemption of the soul is precious. Fools make a mock of sin \*. But they will not think lightly of it, who duly consider the majesty, authority, and goodness of him, against whom it is committed; and who are taught, by what God actually *has done*, what sin rendered necessary *to be done*, before a sinner could have a well-grounded hope of forgiveness. For wisdom does nothing in vain. The death of the Son of

\* Prov. xvi. 9.

God would have been in vain \*, if the great design, in favour of sinful men, could have been effected by inferior means. But as he, in the office of Mediator, was the hope of mankind, from the beginning ; so the great work he has accomplished, and the characters he sustains, when made known to the conscience, are, in fact, sufficient to relieve in every case, to answer every charge, and to satisfy the believer in Jesus, that there is now no condemnation to fear. There are many (as we have observed) ready to accuse, but it is in vain ; the charge may be true, but it is overruled. Who shall dare to condemn, if things be as the apostle states them in this passage ? Whoever would impeach the hope of a true believer, must prove (if he can) that Christ did not die ; or that he did not rise from the dead ; or that he was not admitted into the presence of God on our behalf ; or that he is unmindful of his promise, to make intercession for all who come unto God by him. For if these points are indubitable and sure, it is impossible that the soul, which has trusted in Jesus, and put its cause into his hands, can miscarry.

\* Gal. ii. 21.

The death and resurrection of our Lord, his appearance in our nature, clothed with glory, seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, as the High Priest of our profession, can scarcely be considered too often. These old truths are always new to those who love him, and are the food by which their souls live. Yet, I shall not, at present, repeat what I have offered upon them from former passages, but shall chiefly confine myself to the subject of his intercession, which has not, until now, expressly occurred to our meditations.

The word the apostle uses, here, and in *Heb. vii. 25*—*seeing he ever liveth to make intercession*, occurs likewise *Acts xxv. 24.* where Festus speaks of the process managed by the Jews against Paul; and also *Rom. xi. 2.* of Elijah's making intercession to God against Israel. From these passages compared together, we may observe, that the word is to be taken in a large sense. He pleads our cause, he manages our concerns, he answers our enemies. Who then shall condemn those for whom the Lord Jesus thus employs his power and his love? He is our advocate\*.

\* 1 John ii. 1.

He

He takes upon him our whole concern. He pleads as a Priest, and manages as a King, for those who come unto God by him.

I. *He pleads as a priest.* His office of intercession has a plain reference to his great instituted type, the high priest under the Levitical dispensation; who, according to the appointment of God, entered within the vail, to present the blood of the sacrifice before the mercy-seat\*. We have a clear and infallible explanation of the design of this institution. *Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all, was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was yet standing. Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordi-*

\* Lev. xvi.

*nances imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us\*, &c. Thus Jesus is passed into the heavens, entered into the holy of holies, with his own blood. His presence there, in our nature, with the marks of his sufferings for us, as the Lamb that has been slain, is an unceasing virtual intercession on our behalf. I meddle not with curious questions on this subject, as to the manner in which his intercession is carried on. It is sufficient to know that he is *there*, and *there for us*, as our representative. This consideration, is of continual use, to animate and encourage sinners in their approach to God. There are three cases, particularly, in which the heart, that knows its own bitterness, must sink, were it not for the relieving thought, That there is an *advocate with the Father*, a *High Priest*,*

\* Heb. ix. 6—12.

who

who by his intercession is *able to save to the uttermost*.

1. When the mind is burdened with guilt. Great is the distress of an awakened conscience. The sinner now is sensible of wants, which God alone can supply, and of miseries, from which he cannot be extricated, but by an Almighty arm. But when he thinks of the majesty and holiness of God, he is troubled, and adopts the language of the prophet, *Wo is me, I am undone* \*. He dares not draw near to God, nor does he dare to keep, any longer, at a distance from him. But when such a one is enabled to look to Jesus as the intercessor, what light and comfort does he receive? For the gospel speaks inviting language. Let not the weary and heavy laden sinner fear to approach. Your peace is already made in the court above, and your advocate is waiting to introduce you. Lift up your heart to him, and think you hear him, in effect, saying, “ Father, there is  
 “ another sinner, who has heard of my name,  
 “ and desires to trust in me. Father, I will,  
 “ that he also may be delivered from going

\* Isa. vi. 5.

“ down



“ down into the pit, and interested in the  
 “ ransom which I have provided.”

2. When we are deeply conscious of our defects in duty. If we compare our best performances, with the demands of the law, the majesty of God, and the unspeakable obligations we are under; if we consider our innumerable sins of omission, and that the little we can do, is polluted and defiled by the mixture of evil thoughts, and the working of selfish principles, aims, and motives, which, though we disapprove, we are unable to suppress, we have great reason to confess, *To us belong shame and confusion of face* \*. But we are relieved by the thought, that Jesus, the High Priest, bears the iniquity of our holy things, perfumes our prayers with the incense of his mediation, and washes our tears in his own blood. This inspires a confidence, that though we are unworthy of the least of his mercies, we may humbly hope for a share in the greatest blessings he bestows, because we are heard and accepted, not on the account of our own prayers and services, but in the beloved Son of God, who maketh intercession for us.

\* Dan. ix. 7.

Thus the wisdom and love of God have provided a wonderful expedient, which, so far as it is rightly understood, and cordially embraced, while it lays the sinner low as the dust, in point of humiliation and self-abasement, fills him, at the same time, with a hope full of glory, which, with respect to its foundation, cannot be shaken ; and, with respect to its object, can be satisfied with nothing less than all the fulness of God. There are favoured seasons, in which the believer, having a lively impression of the authority and love of the Intercessor, can address the great Jehovah, as his Father, with no less confidence, than if he was holy and spotless as the angels before the throne, at the very moment that he has abundant cause to say, *Behold I am vile ! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes \* !*

3. This powerful and prevalent intercession, abundantly compensates for the poverty and narrowness of our prayers. Experience confirms what the scripture declares of our insufficiency to order our own cause before the Lord, to specify our various wants, and to fill our mouths with such arguments,

\* Job xl. 4. xlii. 6.

as may engage the attention, and enliven the affections of our hearts. *We know not how to pray as we ought* \*. And though the holy Spirit teaches believers to form petitions, which, in the main, are agreeable to the will of God, yet we often mistake and ask amiss; we often forget what we ought to ask, and we are too often, cold, negligent, weary, distracted and formal in prayer. How prone are we to enter by prayer into the Lord's presence, as the thoughtless *horse rushes into the battle* †! to speak to God, as if we were only speaking into the air, and to have our thoughts dissipated and wandering to the ends of the earth, while his holy name is upon our polluted lips! It is well for us, that God is both able and gracious to do more than we can ask or think; but that he actually does so, for such unworthy creatures, is owing to our Intercessor. *He* knows all our wants, and pleads and provides accordingly. *He* is not negligent, though *we* too frequently are. He prayed for Peter's safety ‡, before Peter himself was aware of his danger. Have we not sometimes, been, as it were, surprized and

\* Rom. viii. 26. † Jer. viii. 6. ‡ Luke xxii. 31, 32.

shamed by the Lord's goodness, when he has condescended to bestow special and needful mercies upon us, before we thought of asking for them? These are affecting proofs of our Intercessor's attention and care, and that he is always mindful of us. But

II. Jesus, the High Priest is upon a throne. He is a King, *King of saints, and King of nations*. He is not only a righteous advocate, but he possesses all authority and power. And it belongs to his office as King, *effectually to manage for those in whose behalf he intercedes*. I have already observed, that the original word, includes this sense.

1. He is the source and fountain of their supplies. All their springs are in him. The fulness of wisdom, grace, and consolation, out of which they are invited to receive, resides in him. And, therefore, he says, *If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it* \*. Not merely I will present your petitions, but I will fulfil them myself. For all things are committed into his hands, and it is he *with whom we have to do* †. He, therefore, enjoins us, If we believe, or trust in God, to *believe also in him* ‡. His invita-

\* John xiv. 14. † Heb. iv. 13. ‡ John xiv. 1.

tions,

tions, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink* \*. *Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life, freely* †; equally expresses his sovereignty and his munificence. On him the eyes of all who know him, wait from age to age, and are not disappointed. *He opens his hand, and satisfies them with good* ‡. Nor is the store of his bounty diminished, by all that he has distributed, for it is unsearchable and inexhaustible; like the light of the sun, which gladdens the eyes of millions at once, has done so from the beginning, and will continue to do so, to the end of time.

2. He appoints and adjusts their various dispensations, with an unerring suitableness to their several states, capacities, and circumstances. If a skilful gardener had the command of the weather, he would not treat all his plants, nor the same plant at all times, exactly alike. Continual rain, or continual sunshine, would be equally unfavourable to their growth and fruitfulness. In his kingdom of Providence, he so proportions the rain and the sunshine to each other, that the corn is usually brought forward, from the

\* John vii. 37. † Rev. xxi. 17. ‡ Ps. cxlv. 17.

seed to the blade, the ear, and the full ripe ear. And I believe it would be always so, were it not for the prevalence of sin, which sometimes makes the *heavens over our head brass, the earth under our feet, iron\**, and turns a fruitful land into barrenness. So, in his kingdom of grace, he trains his people up by various exercises. He delights in their prosperity, and does not willingly grieve them. But afflictions, in their present state, are necessary, and his blessing makes them salutary. But this is their great privilege, that their comforts and their crosses are equally from his hand, are equally tokens of his love, and alike directed to work together for their good. He appoints the bounds of their habitations, numbers the hairs of their heads, and is their guide and guard, their sun and shield, even unto death. Here they meet with many changes, but none that are unnoticed by him, none that can separate them from his love, and they all concur, in leading them on, to a state of unchangeable and endless joy †.

3. He is *the Captain of their salvation* ‡. They are his soldiers, and fight under his

\* Deut. xxviii. 23. † 2 Cor. iv. 17. ‡ Heb. ii. 10.  
eye ;

eye; yet the battle is not theirs, but his. Israel, of old, were to muster their forces, to range themselves for the fight, to use every precaution and endeavour, as though success depended entirely upon themselves. Yet, they obtained not the victory by their own sword, but it was the Lord who fought for them, and trod down their enemies before them; and *they* had little more to do, than to pursue the vanquished, and to divide the spoil. And thus it is in the warfare, which true Christians maintain, *not against flesh and blood only, but against principalities and powers* \*; against the spirit of the world, and against satan and his legions. They fight in his cause, but he upholds them and conquers for them. Their enemies are too many and too mighty for them to grapple with in their own strength. But he rebukes them, and pleads the cause of his people. His gracious interposition in their favour, is beautifully set forth, together with its effects, in the vision which the prophet saw, when he was sent to encourage the rulers and people of the Jews, against the difficulties they met with, when rebuilding the temple.

\* Eph. vi. 12.

He *saw Joshua the high priest*, who, in that character, represented the collective body of the people, *standing before the Lord, clothed in filthy garments, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him* \*. Such is our attire as sinners, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and such are the attempts of our enemy, to deter us from approaching to him who alone can relieve us, or, to distress us when we appear before him. But when Joshua could not speak for himself, the Lord spake for him, claimed him for his own, as a brand plucked out of the fire, silenced his adversary, clothed him with change of raiment, and set a fair mitre upon his head. Thus David acknowledged the Lord's goodness, in providing him a table in the midst of his enemies †; who saw, with envy, his privileges, but were not able to prevent his enjoyment of them. Many a time, the Lord thus comforts and feeds his people, while waiting on him in secret, or attending his public ordinances: and were our eyes opened, like the eyes of Elisha's servant, to behold what is very near, though unseen, we should feel the force of the Psalmist's observation.

\* Zech. iii. 1—4.

† Ps. xxiii. 3.



The powers of darkness surround us, their malice against us, is heightened by the favour of our good Shepherd towards us; they rage, but in vain; for though they could presently deprive us of peace, and fill us with anguish, if we were left exposed to their assaults, they are under a restraint, and can do nothing without his permission. When he is pleased to give quietness, *who then can make trouble* \* ? He preserves and provides for his sheep, in the midst of wolves !

We may close this part of our subject, with two or three reflections, which though, as to the substance of them, I may have offered you before, are always seasonable and suitable, when we are speaking of the power and grace of MESSIAH.

1. How precious is this Saviour ! How justly is he entitled to the chief place in the hearts of those who know him ! In the work of salvation, from the first step to the last, he is all in all. If he had not died and risen again, we must have died for ever. If he had not ascended into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us, we must have been thrust down into the lowest hell.

\* Job xxxiv. 29.

If he did not plead for us, we could not, we durst not, offer a word in our own behalf. If he was not on our part, engaged to keep us night and day, our enemies would soon be too hard for us. May we, therefore, give him the glory due to his name, and cleave to him, and trust in him, alone.

2. How safe are the people, of whom he undertakes the care! While his eye is upon them, his ear open to their prayer, and his arm of power stretched out for their protection; while he remembers that word of promise, upon which he himself has caused them to hope; while he retains that faithfulness, which, encouraged them to commit their souls to him, it is impossible that any weapon or stratagem formed against them can prevail. There are many, it is true, who will rise up against them, but God is for them, and with them, a very present help in trouble \*. They are full of wants and fears, and, in themselves, liable to many charges; but since Jesus is their head, their security, their intercessor, no needful good shall be withheld from them, no charge admitted against them, none shall condemn them, for it is God, himself, who justifies the believer in Jesus.

\* Ps. xlv. 1.

3. If these things be so, how much are they to be pitied, who hear of them, without being affected or influenced by them? Will you always be content with hearing? *Ob taste and see, that the Lord is good\*!* Should you at last be separated from those with whom you now join in public worship; should you see them admitted into the kingdom of God, and you yourselves be thrust out; your present advantages would then prove an aggravation of your guilt and misery. As yet, there is room. Strive to enter, while the gate of mercy remains open. Think of the solemnities of that great day. Many will then be condemned, though they, who believe in the Son of God, will be justified. Consider who will condemn them, *God himself †*. From his inquisition there can be no retreat; from his sentence there can be no appeal. And consider what the condemnation will be! A final exclusion from his favour; a never-ceasing sense of his awful displeasure! A state of eternal horror and despair, without mitigation, without the smallest ray of hope. Can you deliberately give up all claim to happiness, and determine

\* Ps. xxxiv. 8.

† Ibid. l. 6.

to rush upon the thick bosses of God's buckler \*, to defy his power, and to dare his threatenings, rather than forego the transitory and delusive pleasures of sin? And can you do this, with the gospel sounding in our ears? May the Lord prevent it! However, observe, you are once more warned, once more invited. If now at last, after so many delays, so much perverseness, on your part, you will honestly and earnestly seek him, he will be found of you. But if you persist in your obstinacy, your condemnation will be inevitable and sure.

\* Job xv. 26.

# S E R M O N XLVIII.

THE SONG OF THE REDEEMED.

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REV. v. 9.

—*Thou—hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood  
[out of every kindred, and tongue, and peo-  
ple, and nation.]*

**T**HE extent, variety and order of the creation, proclaim the glory of God. He is likewise, *Maximus in minimis*. The smallest of the works, that we are capable of examining, such for instance as the eye, or the wing, of a little insect, the creature of a day, are stamped with an inimitable impression of his wisdom and power. Thus in his written word, there is a greatness considering it as a *whole*, and a beauty and accuracy  
in

in the smaller parts, analogous to what we observe in the visible creation, and answerable to what, an enlightened and humble mind, may expect in a book, which bears the character of a divine revelation. A single verse, a single clause, when viewed (if I may so speak) in the microscope of close meditation, is often found to contain a fulness, a world of wonders. And though a connected and comprehensive acquaintance with the whole scripture, be desirable and useful, and is no less the privilege, than the duty, of those who have capacity and time at their own disposal, to acquire it; yet, there is a gracious accommodation to the weakness of some persons, and the circumstances of others. So that in many parts of scripture, whatever is immediately necessary to confirm our faith, to animate or regulate our practice, is condensed into a small compass, and comprized in a few verses: yea, sometimes a single sentence, when unfolded and examined, will be found to contain all the great principles of duty and comfort. Such is the sentence which I have now read to you. In the *Messiah*, it is inserted in the grand chorus taken from the 12th and 13th verses of this chapter,

chapter,

chapter. And as it may lead us to a compendious recapitulation of the whole subject, and, by the Lord's blessing, may prepare us to join in the following ascription of praise to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb; I purpose to consider it in its proper connection, as a part of the leading song of the redeemed before the throne, in which the angels cannot share. Though the angels, from their love to redeemed sinners, and from their views of the manifold wisdom and glory of God, in visiting *such* sinners with *such* a salvation, cheerfully take a part in the general chorus.

The redemption spoken of, is suited to the various cases of sinners, of every nation, people and language. And many sinners of divers descriptions, and from distant situations, scattered abroad into all lands, through a long succession of ages, will, by the efficacy of this redemption, be gathered together into one\*. They will constitute one family, united in one great Head †. When they shall fully attain the end of their hope, and encircle the throne, day without night, rejoicing, their remembrance of what they

\* John xi. 52.

† Eph. iii. 14, 15.

once were, their sense of the happiness they are raised to, and of the great consideration, to which they owe their deliverance, and their exaltation, will excite a perpetual joyful acknowledgment to this purport. They were once lost, but could contribute nothing to their own recovery. Therefore they ascribe all the glory to their Saviour. They strike their golden harps and sing, in strains, loud as from numbers without number, sweet as from blest voices, *Thou art worthy—for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.*

But though this song, and this joy, will only be consummated in heaven, the commencement takes place upon earth. Believers, during their present state of warfare, are taught to sing it; in feebler strains indeed, but the subject of their joy, and the object of their praise, are the same which inspire the harps and songs in the world of light. May I not say, that this life is the time of their rehearsal? They are now learning their song, and advancing in meetness to join in the chorus on high, which, as death successively removes them, is continually

ally



ally increasing by the accession of fresh voices. All that they knew, or desire to know, all that they possess or hope for, is included in this ascription.

I take the last clause of the verse into the subject. The words suggest three principal points, to our consideration.

I. The benefit, *Redemption, to God.*

II. The redemption price, *By thy blood.*

III. The extent of the benefit—to a people *out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation.*

I. *Thou hast redeemed us to God.* Redemption or ransom, is applicable to a state of imprisonment for debt, and to a state of bondage or slavery. From these ideas taken together, we may form some estimate of the misery of our fallen state; a theme, which, if I cannot insist upon at large in every discourse, I would never, wholly, omit. For we can neither understand the grace, nor enjoy the comfort of the gospel, but in proportion as we have a heart-felt and abiding conviction of our wretched condition, as sinners, without it. They who think themselves whole, know not their need of a physician\*, but to the sick he is welcome.

\* Matt. ix. 12.

If a man, shut up in prison for a heavy debt, which he is utterly incapable of discharging, should obtain his liberty, in consideration of payment made for him, by another, he might be properly said, to be redeemed from imprisonment. This supposition will apply to our subject. The law and justice of God have demands upon us, which we cannot answer. We are therefore shut up, under the law, in unbelief, helpless and hopeless, till we know and can plead the engagement of a surety for us. For a time, like Peter, we are sleeping in our prison \*, regardless of danger. The first sensible effect of the grace of God, is to awaken us from this insensibility. Then, we begin to feel the horrors of our dungeon, and the strength of our chains, and to tremble under the apprehension of an impending doom. But grace proceeds to reveal the Saviour and friend of sinners, and to encourage our application to him. In a good hour the chains fall off, the bars of iron and brass are broken asunder, and the prison-doors fly open. The prisoner understands that all his great debt is forgiven, blesses his Deliverer, obtains his liberty, and departs in peace.

\* Acts xii. 6—10.

We are likewise in bondage. The servants, the slaves, of a harder task-master, than Pharaoh was to Israel. Satan, though not by right, yet by a righteous permission, tyrannizes over us, till Jesus makes us free\*. The way of transgressors is hard †. Though the sollicitations and commands, of that enemy who worketh in the children of disobedience ‡, are, in some respects, suited to our depraved inclinations, yet the consequences are grievous. A burdened conscience, a wasted constitution, a ruined fortune and character, swiftly and closely, follow the habits of intemperance and lewdness. And they who seem to walk in a smoother path, are deceived, mortified and disappointed daily. If persons, who live, openly and habitually, in a course, that is contrary to the rule of God's word, *Speak swelling words of vanity* ||, and boast of their liberty, believe them not. We are sure they carry that in their bosom, which, hourly, contradicts their assertions. Yea, sometimes their slavery is so galling, that they attempt to escape, but in vain. They are soon retaken, and their bonds made stronger. The

\* John viii. 34, 36. † Prov. xiii. 15. † Eph. ii. 2. || 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19.

issue of their short lived reformations, which they defer as long as possible, and at last set about with reluctance, usually is, that their latter end proves worse than their beginning. At most, they only exchange one sinful habit for another, sensuality for avarice, or prodigality for pride. The strong one armed will maintain his dominion, till the stronger than he interposes and says, *Loose him, and let him go, for I have found a ransom.* Then, by virtue of the redemption price; *the prey is taken from the mighty, and the captive is delivered*\*. Then, the enslaved sinner, like the man out of whom the legion was cast, sits at the feet of Jesus, in peace, *and in his right mind* †. He becomes the Lord's freedman.

For he is not only delivered from guilt and thrall, he *is redeemed to God.* He is now restored to his original state, as an obedient and dependent creature, devoted to his Creator, conformed to his will and image, and admitted to communion with him in love. These are blessings which alone can satisfy the soul, and, without which, it is impossible for man to be happy. While he is

\* Isa. lxx. 24, 25.

† Mark v. 15.

ignorant of his proper good, and seeks it in creatures, he is, and must be, wretched. Madness is in his heart, a deceived, disordered imagination turns him aside, and he feeds upon ashes, and upon the wind\*. But by grace he is renewed to a sound judgment, his mind receives a right direction, and he is *turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God* †.

II. What unspeakably, and beyond conception, enhances the value of this deliverance, is, the consideration of the means by which it is effected. For it is not merely a deliverance, but *a redemption*. It is not an act of mere mercy, but of mercy harmonizing with justice. It is not an act of power only, but of unexampled, and expensive love. *Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood!*

The sentence, denounced by the law against transgressors, was death. And therefore when MESSIAH became our surety, to satisfy the law for us, he must die. The expression of *his blood*, is often used figuratively for his death, perhaps, to remind us how he died. His was a bloody death. When he was in his agony, in Gethsemane, his *sweat*

\* Isa. xliv. 20.

† Acts xxvi. 18.

*was as great drops of blood, falling down to the ground* \*. His blood flowed when he gave his back to the smiters, under the painful strokes of the scourging he endured, previous to his crucifixion. It flowed from his head, when the soldiers having mocked his character of King, by crowning him with thorns, by their rude blows forced the thorns into his temples. His blood streamed from the wounds made by the spikes, which pierced his hands and his feet, when they fastened him to the cross. When he hung upon the cross, his body was full of wounds, and covered with blood. And, after his death, another large wound was made in his side, from which issued blood and water. Such was the redemption price he paid for sinners, his blood, the blood of his heart. Without shedding of blood there could be no remission. Nor could any blood answer the great design, but his. Not any, not all the bloody sacrifices appointed by the law of Moses, could take away sin, as it respects the conscience, nor afford a plea, with which a sinner could venture to come before the high God †. But the blood of MESSIAH,

\* Luke xxii. 44.

† Micah vi. 6.

in whom were united, the perfections of the divine nature and the real properties of humanity, and, which, the apostle therefore styles *the blood of God* \*, this precious blood cleanses from all sin. It is exhibited, as a propitiation of perpetual efficacy, *by which God declares his righteousness*, no less than his mercy, *in forgiving iniquities* †, and shews himself just to the demands of his holiness, and the honour of his government, when he accepts and justifies the sinner who believes in Jesus.

If these things were understood and attended to, would it be thought wonderful, that this Saviour is very precious to those who believe in him, and who obtain redemption by his blood? How can it possibly be otherwise? Grace, like this, when known, *must* captivate and fix the heart! Not only to save, but to die, and to die for his enemies! Such costly love, productive of such glorious consequences, and to such unworthy creatures! Surely the apostle's mind was filled and fired with these considerations, when authenticating an epistle with his own hand, he subjoined this emphatical close, *If*

\* Acts xx. 28.

† Rom. iii. 25, 26.

*any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha* \*! Do you think, my brethren, that the apostle took pleasure in denouncing so severe a sentence, against all those who did not see (as we say) with his eyes? Had he so little affection for sinners, that he could thus consign them to destruction by multitudes, for differing from him, in what some persons only deem an opinion? Rather, consider him, not as breathing out his own wishes, but as speaking in the name, and on the behalf of God. He knew it must be, and he declared it would be so. It was no pleasure to him, to see them determined to perish. On the contrary, he had great grief and sorrow of heart for them, even for the Jews, who had treated him with the greatest cruelty. Even for *their* sakes, he could have been content to be made an Anathema himself †, that they might be saved. But upon the whole, he acquiesced in the will of God, and acknowledged it to be just, right and equal, that if any man would not love the Lord Jesus Christ, after all that he had done and suffered for sinners, he should be accursed. By this

\* 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

† Rom. ix. 3.



comparison of the apostle's severe language, with his compassionate temper, I am led to digress a little farther. It suggests an apology for ministers of the gospel in general. When we declare the terrors of the Lord, when we assure you that there is but one solid foundation for hope, and that, unless you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you must perish; some of our hearers account us bigoted, uncharitable and bitter. But if you could see what passes in secret, how faithful ministers mourn over those who reject their message, how their disobedience cuts them to the heart, and abates the comfort they would otherwise find in your service; if you could believe us when we say (I trust truly) that we are ready to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but our own souls also, because you are dear to us \*, and we long for your salvation, then, you would think more favourably of us. But after all, we cannot, we dare not, soften our message to please men. What we find in the word of God, we must declare. It would be at the peril of our souls, to *speake smooth things*, to *propheesy deceits* † to you; and, so far as we

\* 1 Thes. ii. 8.

† Isa. xxx. 10.

preach the truth, it will be at the peril of your souls, if we are disregarded.

III. The benefits of this redemption extend to a numerous people, who are said to be redeemed out of every kindred, tongue and nation. I have, upon a former occasion, offered you my sentiments concerning the extent of the virtue of that blood, which taketh away the sin of the world\*. But the clause, now before us, invites me to make a few additional observations, upon a subject which, I conceive, it much concerns us rightly to understand.

The redeemed of the Lord, are those who actually experience the power of his redemption, who are delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan, and brought into a state of liberty, peace and holiness. That the people of every kindred, nation and tongue are not redeemed, in this sense, universally, is as certain, as evidence of facts, and express declarations of scripture, can make it. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Multitudes, thus disqualified, will be found trembling, on the left hand of the Judge, at the great day. But, *a remnant will be saved, according to the election of grace.* For they

\* Vol. I. Sermon XVI. p. 298.

who

who differ, who are redeemed to the service of God, while others live and die in the love and service of sin, do not make themselves to differ \*. It becomes the potsherds of the earth, to ascribe to their Maker, the glory of his sovereignty, and to acknowledge that if they have a good hope, it is, because it pleased the Lord to make *them his people, who once were not his people* †. Yet, a way of conceiving of the doctrines of the divine sovereignty, and of a personal election unto life, has often obtained, which seems to have a tendency to render the mind narrow, selfish and partial, and to streighten the exercise of that philanthropy, which the genius and spirit of the gospel, powerfully inculcate. The best of us, perhaps, are more prone than we are aware of, to assimilate the great God to ourselves, and to frame our ideas of him, too much according to our own image. So that, often, much of a man's natural disposition, may be observed in the views he forms of the divine perfections and conduct; as on the other hand, his conceptions of the character of God, strengthen and confirm him in his own tempers and habits. There are persons, who

\* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

† Hos. ii. 23.

being

being persuaded in their minds (we would hope upon sure grounds) that they, themselves, are of the elect, appear to be little concerned what may become of others. Their notions of God's sovereignty, and his right to do what he will with his own, though, often, insufficient to preserve them from repining and impatience under the common events of human life, raise them above all doubts and difficulties, on a subject, which the apostle speaks of as unsearchable and untraceable; where he acknowledges depths which he was unable to fathom\*, all appears, to them, quite plain and easy. Where he admires and adores, they arrogantly dispute, and determine *ex cathedra*, and harshly censure all who are not so eagle-eyed as themselves. Methinks they who know the worth of a soul, from its vast capacity for happiness and misery, and its immortal duration, cannot justly be blamed for allowing no limits, to their benevolent wishes for the salvation of mankind, but the will of God as it is, plainly, made known to us in his word. To this we are to submit, not as of necessity only, but cheerfully, assured that

\* Rom. xi. 33.

his will is wise, holy and good ; that the Judge of all the world will do right ; and to wait for the day, when he will condescend to clear up every difficulty, and give us that satisfaction, which, in our present state of ignorance and weakness, we are incapable of receiving. Shall mortal man be more just, or can he be more merciful, than God ? It is a false compassion, founded in a blameable disregard of what is due to the glory of his great name, that prompts us to form a wish, that, his unerringly wise appointments, could be otherwise than they are. Yet it is a comfort to think that his mercy, in which he delights, in which he is peculiarly said to be rich, and which is higher than the heavens, will, in its exercise, far exceed the bounds, which, some fallible mortals, would peremptorily assign to it. We must not indulge conjecture and hypothesis farther than the scripture will warrant ; but while we humbly depend upon this infallible light, we need not be afraid to follow it, though it should, in some particulars, lead us a little beyond the outlines of some long received, and, in the main, very valuable, human systems of divinity.

I have

I have repeatedly expressed my belief, that many prophecies, respecting the spread and glory of the kingdom of MESSIAH upon earth, have not yet received their full accomplishment, and that a time is coming, when many, (perhaps the greater part of mankind) of all nations, and people, and languages, shall know the joyful sound of the gospel, and walk in the light of the Redeemer's countenance. At present, I would confine myself to consider, what ground the scripture affords us to hope, that there are many of every nation, people and tongue, even now, singing this song before his throne.

The Revelations vouchsafed to the beloved disciple in Patmos exhibit a succession of great events, extending (I suppose) from the apostles days, to the end of time. But while only the learned can so much as attempt to ascertain, from history, the dates and facts, to which the prophecies already fulfilled refer; or to offer probable conjectures concerning the events, as yet, future; (in which the most judicious commentators are far from being agreed) there are passages, interspersed, which seem designed to administer consolation to plain believers, by representations suited to

raise

raise their thoughts, to the state of the church triumphant. Though they are unable to explain the *particulars* of what they read, there is a glory resulting from the *whole*, which animates their hope and awakens their joy. Of this kind I think is that vision \*, in which, the apostle saw the servants of God, who were sealed in their foreheads, in number a hundred and forty-four thousand; and besides these, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, *Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, &c.* I confess myself unable to expound this sublime passage, and to give the full, or even the principal, sense of it, with certainty. But that it has some reference to what is now passing, within the veil, which, hides the unseen world from our view, I cannot doubt. I propose my thoughts upon it with caution and diffidence. I dare not speak with that certainty, which I feel myself warranted to use, when I set before

\* Rev. vii. 9, ad finem.

you,

you, from scripture, the great truths which are essential to a life of faith in the Son of God. Yet, I hope to advance nothing that is contrary to scripture, or, to any deductions fairly and justly, drawn from it.

Having premised this acknowledgment of my incompetence to decide positively, I venture to say, that by the hundred and forty-four thousand sealed in their foreheads (a definite for an indefinite number, which is frequent in scripture language) I understand, those, who, living to mature age and where the gospel is afforded, are enabled to make a public and visible profession of religion, and are marked, as it were, in their foreheads, and known to whom they belong, by their open and habitual separation, from the spirit and customs, of the world which lieth in wickedness. And the exceeding great multitude, contradistinguished from these, I conceive to be those, who are, elsewhere, styled the Lord's *hidden ones*; and that these, are a great multitude indeed, gathered by him, who knows them that are his, out of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples and tongues. I may distribute them into the following classes.

I. *In-*



1. *Infants.* I think it, at least, highly probable, that when our Lord says, *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven* \*, he does not only intimate the necessity of our becoming like little children, in simplicity, as a qualification without which (as he expressly declares in other places) we cannot enter into his kingdom, but informs us of a fact; that the number of infants, who are effectually redeemed to God by his blood, so greatly exceeds the aggregate of adult believers, that, comparatively speaking, his kingdom may be said to consist of little children. The apostle speaks of them as not having *sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression* †, that is, with the consent of their understanding and will. And when he says, *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, he adds, that every man may give an account of what he has done in the body, whether it be good or bad* ‡. But children who die in their infancy have not done any thing in the body; either good or bad. It is true, they are by nature evil, and must, if saved, be the subjects of a supernatural

\* Matt. xix. 14. † Rom. v. 14. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 10.  
change.

change. And though we cannot conceive how this change is to be wrought, yet, I suppose, few are so rash as to imagine it impossible that any infants can be saved. The same power that produces this change in some, can produce it in all. And therefore I am willing to believe, till the scripture forbids me, that infants, of all nations and kindreds, without exception, who die before they are capable of sinning after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who have done nothing in the body of which they can give an account, are included in the election of grace. They are born for a better world than this. They just enter this state of tribulation, they quickly pass through it, *their robes are washed white in the blood of the Lamb*, and they are admitted, for his sake, before the throne. Should I be asked to draw the line, to assign the age, at which, children begin to be accountable for actual sin, it would give me no pain to confess my ignorance. *The Lord knoweth.*

2. *A people hidden among the most degenerate communities, civil or ecclesiastical, that bear the name of Christian; where ignorance and superstition, or errors, which, though*

more refined, are no less contrary to the gospel, have a prevailing dominion and influence. What can be more deplorable, in the view of an enlightened and benevolent mind, than the general state of the Roman and Greek churches! Where the traditions; inventions and doctrines of men; a train of pompous and burdensome ceremonies; a dependance upon masses, penance and pilgrimages, upon legends and fictitious saints, form the principal features of the public religion. Many nations are involved in this gross darkness; but they are not wholly destitute of the scripture; some portions of it, are interwoven with their authorized forms of worship; and we cannot, with reason, doubt, but a succession of individuals, among them, have been acquainted with the life and power of true godliness, notwithstanding, the disadvantages and prejudices of their education. There are, likewise, amongst protestants, schemes of doctrine, supported by learning, and by numbers, which are not more conformable to the standard of the New Testament, than the grossest errors of popery; and yet, here and there, persons may be met with, who, by the agency of the holy Spirit, enabling them to

understand the scriptures, are made wiser than their teachers; and who, though still fettered by some mistakes and prejudices, give evidence in the main, that their hopes are fixed upon the only atonement, that they are redeemed to God, and are partakers of that faith which worketh by love, purifies the heart, and overcometh the world.

3. I will go one step farther. The inferences that have been made, by some persons, from the apostle Peter's words, *That God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him*\*, are, undoubtedly, rash and unscriptural. They would conclude from thence, that it is of little importance what people believe, provided they are sincere in their way. That the idolatrous heathens, even the most savage of them, whose devotion is cruelty, who pollute their worship with human blood, and live in the practice of vices disgraceful to humanity, are in a very safe state, because they act, as it is supposed, according to their light. *But if the light which is in them be darkness, how great is that darkness!* Such

\* Acts x. 34, 35.

a lax candour as this, tends to make the gospel unnecessary ; if they who have it not, are, therefore, excusable, though they neither love nor fear God, and live in open violation of the law of their nature. The declaration, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord* \*, holds universally, and without a single exception. But if we suppose a *heathen*, destitute of the means of grace by which conversion is usually wrought, to be brought to a sense of his misery, of the emptiness and vanity of worldly things, to a conviction that he cannot be happy without the favour of the great Lord of the world, to a feeling of guilt, and a desire of mercy ; and that though he has no explicit knowledge of a Saviour, he directs the cry of his heart to the unknown Supreme, to this purport, *Ens entium miserere mei, Father and source of beings, have mercy upon me !* Who will prove, that such views and desires can arise in the heart of a sinner, without the energy of that Spirit, which, Jesus is exalted to bestow ? Who will take upon him to say, that his blood has not sufficient efficacy, to redeem to God, a sinner who is thus disposed, though he has never heard of his

\* Heb. xii. 14.

name? Or who has a warrant to affirm, that the supposition I have made is, in the nature of things, impossible to be realized? But I stop—I do not often amuse you with conjecture. And though, for want of express warrant from scripture, I dare not give the sentiments I have now offered, a stronger name, than, probable or conjectural, I hope I do not propose them for your *amusement*. They will prove to your advantage and my own, if they are helpful to guard us against a narrow, harsh, and dogmatical spirit; and if, without abating our reverent submission to the revealed will of God, they have a tendency to confirm our views of his goodness, and the power and compassions of the great Redeemer.

# S E R M O N XLIX.

THE CHORUS OF ANGELS.

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REV. V. 12.

*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour and glory, and blessing!*

**I**T was a good report which the queen of Sheba heard, in her own land, of the wisdom and glory of Solomon. It lessened her attachment to home, and prompted her to undertake a long journey, to visit this greater King, of whom she had heard so much. She went, and she was not disappointed. Great as the expectations were, which she had formed from the relation made her by others, they fell short of what she saw and heard herself, when she was ad-

mited into his presence. Good, likewise, is the report of the gospel. It has a powerful effect upon those who receive it by faith. It is abundantly sufficient to convince them, of the comparative insignificance, of all that they most admired and esteemed in this world. From that hour, they become strangers and pilgrims upon earth. They set out, in the way which God has prescribed, in hopes of seeing him who is greater than Solomon; and the report they have heard of him, is their subject, their song, and their joy, while they are on their journey, and their great support, under the difficulties they meet with on the road. What then will it be to see him as he is? As yet, the one half is not told them. Or, at least, they are not yet capable of conceiving the half, or the thousandth part, of what they read in the scripture, concerning his wisdom, his glory, and his grace. We weaken, rather than enlarge, the sense of such a passage as this, by our feeble comments. We must die, before we can understand it. To the bulk of mankind, *Wait the great teacher, death*; is cold, is dangerous advice. If they are not taught by the gospel, while they

live,



live, the teaching of death will be too late. Dreadful will be the condition of those, who cannot be convinced of their mistakes, till repentance and amendment will be impracticable. But death will be a great teacher, indeed, to a believer; he will then know more by a glance, and in a moment, of the happiness he is now expecting, than by all he could collect, from the enquiry and experience of a long course of years, in this world.

The scenery of this chapter, if attentively considered, is sufficient, to snatch our thoughts from the little concernments of time, and to give us some anticipation of the employments and enjoyments of heaven. Come, all ye that are wearied and burdened with afflictions and temptations, look up, and for a while, at least, forget your sorrows! The Lamb is upon his throne, surrounded by a multitude of his redeemed people, who, once, were afflicted and burdened like yourselves; but now all tears are wiped from their eyes. They have a song, peculiarly their own, and are represented, as taking the first and leading part in worship and praise. The angels cannot sing their song, they were not

redeemed to God by his blood; but they are interested in the subject. Their highest views, of the manifold wisdom of God, are derived from the wonders of redemption. Therefore they join in the chorus, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory, and blessing.* If you have a humble hope, of bearing a part, in this immortal song, will you hang down your heads like a bulrush, because you have the honour of following your Lord, through many tribulations, to his kingdom?

The number of the angels is expressed, indefinitely, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; myriads and millions; to intimate to us, that, with respect to our capacities and conceptions, they are innumerable. Their number is known to him, who *telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names* \*; and to him only. The scripture intimates a diversity of ranks and orders among them, *Thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers*; but as to particulars, there is little said, that might gratify our curiosity. It is enough, for us, to

\* Ps. cxlvii. 4.

know that the highest of them, and that all of them, worship him who is clothed in our nature. My text expressly informs us, that the object of their worship is *the Lamb that was slain*. Not that the humanity of Christ, which is but a creature, is, simply and formally, the object of their worship. But they worship him who has assumed the human nature into personal union with himself; *God manifest in the flesh*, God in Christ. Though the world censure or despise us, for *honouring the Son as we honour the Father* \*, we have here a good precedent, as we have, in many places of scripture, the warrant of an express command. Whether men are pleased or not, we will, we *must*, worship the Lamb that was slain. To animate our devotion, let us thankfully consider, Why he was slain, and How he was slain.

I. *Why he was slain*. The redeemed say, *For us. He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood* †. They were sinners and enemies. They were slaves to sin and Satan, yet he loved them, and died to redeem them. It is by virtue of his blood and death, that they are now before the throne.

\* John v. 23.

† Rev. i. 5.

Nothing

Nothing less than his death, could have made them duly sensible of their misery, nothing less, could have relieved them from it. He was lifted up upon the cross, that by the powerful magnetism of his dying love, he might, in the hour of his grace, draw their hearts to himself\*. This was the design, this was the effect of his sufferings. A crucified Saviour, though a stumbling-block to the self-righteous, and foolishness to vain reasoners, was, to them, the power and the wisdom of God, for salvation. They looked unto him, and were enlightened, they trusted in him and were not ashamed. By faith in his name, they obtained peace with God, they renounced the ways of sin, they warded the good warfare, they overcame the world, and were, at length, made more than conquerors. For his sake, they endured the cross, and despised the shame. They met with bad treatment from the world, but it was from the world that crucified him. While they were here, their characters were obscured, by their own imperfections, and by the misrepresentations and reproaches of their enemies. But now their reproach is re-

\* John xii. 32.

moved,

moved, and *they shine, each one like the sun, in the kingdom of their Father* \*. What an immense constellation of suns! This their full salvation was the joy set before him, for the sake of which, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And now they see him as he is, they ascribe all their victories and honours to him, and unite in one song of endless praise, to the Lamb that was slain.

II. Their praises are heightened, when they consider, *How he was slain*. He did not die a natural death. *He was slain*. Nor did he fall, like a hero, by an honourable wound in the field of battle. The impression which the death of the late General Wolfe made upon the public, is not yet quite forgotten. He conquered for us, but it cost him his life. But he died honourably, and was lamented by his country. Not so, the Lamb of God. He died the death of a slave, of a malefactor. Cruelty, malice, and contempt, combined to give his sufferings every possible aggravation. And after *he was slain*, very few laid it to heart. The world went on as it did before, as though

\* Matt. xiii. 43.

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\* Matt. xiii. 43.

nothing

nothing extraordinary had happened. But on this dark ground, the perfections of God were displayed in their fullest lustre. And they are the perfections of the great Redeemer, and therefore distinctly ascribed to him by the angels, in the words which follow—*Power, and wisdom, and riches, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*

Though each of these words have a distinct sense, a nicety in defining them, and stating their precise meaning, is of less importance, than to feel the combined efficacy of them all, to impress our hearts with sentiments of reverence, confidence, and love. The fulness of expression may teach us, that every kind of excellence, is the indubitable right and possession of the Lamb that was slain. He is worthy to have them all attributed to him, in the most absolute sense, and consequently worthy of our adoration, dependance, and praise.

1. *Power.* It is spoken once, yea twice we have heard the same, that *power belongeth unto God* \*. It belongeth to him eminently and exclusively. All the power of creatures is derived from him. Such is the power of

\* Pf. lxii. 11.



the Lamb. He stiles himself ὁ παντοκράτωρ \*. The Omnipotent, the Upholder and Possessor of all things. He exerciseth this power in the human nature †. *He doeth what he pleaseth in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ‡*; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, *What doest thou?* He has, therefore, all-sufficiency, and uncontrollable authority, for the discharge of his office, as the Mediator and Head of his church. The divine perfections, being infinite, are not distinct in themselves, though the scripture, in condescension to our weakness, authorizes us to speak of them, as distinguishable. God is one. And the *Power* which can preserve and govern the world, involves in the idea of it, every other excellence, which are separately mentioned in this passage.

2. *Wisdom.* He is the *only wise God, and our Saviour* ||. His knowledge is perfect, his plan is perfect. In himself he is essentially the wisdom of God §, and he is our wisdom \*\*. It is *life eternal to know the only true God ††*, and, therefore, it is life

\* Rev. i. 8, 11. † Matt. xxviii. 18. ‡ Dan. iv. 35.  
 || Jude xxv. § Prov. viii. 22. \*\* 1 Cor. i. 30.  
 †† John xvii. 3.

eternal

eternal to *know Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*. For he is the only way, and the only door to this knowledge; no one can come unto God, or attain to any just conceptions of him, but in and by the Son of his love, who so perfectly represents God to us, is so completely the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, that who so hath seen him, *hath seen the Father* \*. By him is opened to us, the unsearchable wisdom of the divine counsels, particularly, in the great work of redemption. *No one hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him* †. It is by wisdom communicated from him, that his people are made wise unto salvation. Though there are few scholars and philosophers among them, and many of them are despised for their ignorance and weakness, yet in truth, they have all a good understanding, for they know the Lord and his will; they know wherein their proper happiness consists, and how it is to be obtained. They are instructed, how to walk and to please God, how to bear afflictions with patience, and to meet death with com-

\* John xiv. 9. † John i. 18. John xv. 15.

posure. This wisdom is far superior to that of the schools. But *He* bestows and maintains it. The eyes of their mind are opened, and they see by his light, but they have no light of their own, or in themselves. They wait upon him for direction in every difficulty, for the solution of every hard question which perplexes their spirits; and he makes the crooked strait, teaches them to avoid the snares that are laid for them, or extricates them when entangled. Therefore in time, and to eternity, they will admire and adore his wisdom.

3. *Riches.* All the stores of mercy, grace, and comfort, are in him, as light in the sun, or water in the ocean. The apostle speaking of *the unsearchable riches of Christ* \*, gives us the idea of a mine, the height, length, depth, and breadth of which cannot be investigated, nor the immense wealth it contains exhausted. Of this fulness the poor are invited to receive freely, and multitudes from age to age have been enriched, and the treasure is still undiminished. None are sent away empty. And when all have been supplied, it will be full as at first.

\* Eph. iii. 8.

4. *Strength.*

4. *Strength.* That energy and efficacy of his power, by which he accomplishes his holy purposes. Who can conceive of this? How just is the Psalmist's reasoning, *He that formed the eye, shall not be see? He that planted the ear, shall not be hear* \* ? So we may say, How strong is he, from whom, all created strength is derived, and before whom the strength of all creatures, if collected into one effort, would be as chaff before the whirlwind? The Lord of all power and might speaks, and it is done; he commandeth, and it standeth fast. Though the waves of the stormy sea toss themselves, they cannot prevail †; he checks them in the height of their rage, setting bounds to their violence which they cannot pass, saying, *Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall thy proud billows be stayed* ‡. With equal sovereignty, certainty, and ease, he rules over moral agents. He formed the heart of man, and he can fill it with terror or with comfort, in a moment, in any assignable circumstances. He can make it happy in a dungeon ||, or impress it with dismay and

\* Ps. xciv. 9. † Ps. xciii. 3, 4. ‡ Job xxxviii. 10, 11.  
 || Acts xvi. 25.

despair

despair upon a throne \*. All hearts are, thus incessantly, under his influence. And the hedge of his promise and protection, surrounds those who trust in him, as with mountains and walls of brass and fire, impenetrable to the assaults of the powers of darkness, unless so far as he, for wise and holy ends, is pleased to give permission. With the arm of his strength he *upholdeth them that are falling, and raiseth up them that are bowed down †*, and, is, in one and the same instant, a present and immediate help in trouble, to all who call upon him ‡. Therefore they that abide under his shadow are safe; they pass, unhurt, through floods and flames, because their Redeemer is strong. And when, in defiance of all their enemies, he has brought them together in his heavenly kingdom, they will, with one consent, ascribe unto the Lord glory and strength.

5. *Honour*. He is the fountain of it. All the honour of his creatures, and of his people, is from him; as the sun beautifies and gilds the objects he shines upon, which, without him, are opaque and obscure. Because his people are precious in

\* Dan. v. 5, 6. † Ps. cxlv. 14. ‡ Ps. xlvi. 1.

his sight they are honourable. *He clothes them with the garments of salvation, covers them with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, as a bride adorneth herself with jewels* \*. But who can speak of his own inherent honour, as God-man and Mediator ! We must wait till we see him, without a cloud or veil, receiving the homage and adoration of angels and men. For, as yet, the one half cannot be told us ! Then, however, it will be universally known, that he who possesses the fulness of wisdom and power, riches, and strength, is worthy to receive all honour. Ah ! how different will he then appear, from that humble form he once assumed, when, for our sakes, he was a man of sorrows, despised, rejected, and nailed to the ignominious cross !

6. *Glory.* The manifestation of God, that, by which, he is known and magnified, in the view of finite intelligences ; the result, the combined effulgence of his holiness, grace, wisdom, truth, and love : this is his glory, and this glory is revealed and displayed in Christ. He is glorious in his

\* Isa. lxi. 10.

works of creation and providence, but these do not fully exhibit his character. But in the Lamb upon the throne, his glory shines, full-orbed. And all in heaven, and all in earth, who behold it, take up *the song of Moses and the Lamb* \*, *Who is like unto thee, O Lord? Who is like unto thee? Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders! Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, Thou King of saints †!*

7. *Blessing.* He is the author of all blessings, of all the happiness and good which his people receive, and he is the deserved object of their universal praise. The different senses, in which we use the word, *blessing*, taken together, may express that intercourse or communion, which is between the Head and the mystical members of his body. He blesses them *effectually*, with the light of his countenance, with liberty, grace, and peace. He blesses them *daily*. His mercies are renewed to them every morning. He will bless them *eternally*. *Blessed are the people who have this Lord for their God. They can make him no suitable returns, yet,*

\* Exod. xv. 11.

† Rev. xv. iii.

in their way, they bless him. They admire, adore, and praise him. They call upon all the powers of their souls to bless him. They proclaim his goodness, and that he is worthy to receive the ascription of power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing. In proportion to their attainments in this delightful exercise of worship, love, and gratitude, they enjoy a heaven upon earth; and to stand before him continually to behold his glory, to live under the unclouded beams of his favour, and to be able to bless and praise him as they ought, without weariness, abatement, interruption, or end, is what they mean, when they speak of the heaven they hope for hereafter. Such is the blessedness of those who have already died in the Lord. They see his face, they drink of the rivers of pleasure, which are at his right hand, they cast down their crowns before him, and say, Thou art worthy—*Let us not be slothful\*, but followers of them, who through faith and patience, have finished their course, and are entered into the joy of their Lord.*

\* Heb. vi. 12.



Of all this glory and honour, the scripture declares the Lamb that was slain to be worthy. Wisdom, riches, and strength, are his. His power is infinite, his authority supreme. He is the author and giver of all good. He has life in himself, and he is the life of all that live. The Lord and head of the church, and of the universe. Can language express, or can heart conceive, a higher ascription and acknowledgment than this? Can all this be due to a creature, to one of a derived and dependant character? Then, surely, the scripture would have a direct tendency to promote idolatry. Far be the thought from us! The scripture teaches us the knowledge of the true God, and the worship due to him. Therefore, MESSIAH, the Lamb that was slain, is the true God, the proper and immediate object of the worship of angels, and of men.

Let us, therefore, take up a lamentation for those, who slight the glorious Redeemer, and refuse him the honour due to his name. Their mistake should excite, not our anger or scorn, but our pity and prayers. Are there any such amongst us? Alas, my fellow-sinners, you know not what you do!

Alas, you know him not, nor do you know yourselves. I am well aware that a thousand arguments of mine will not persuade you. But I can simply tell you, what would soon make you, at least, desirous, of adopting our sentiments upon this subject. If he, who has that power over the heart which I have been speaking of, was pleased to give you, this moment, a sense of the holiness and authority of God, and of your conduct towards him, as his creatures; your strongest objections to the high honours we attribute to the Saviour, would, this moment, fall to the ground. And you would be immediately convinced, that either Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life, or that you must perish. You would no longer expect mercy, but in a way perfectly consonant with the righteousness and truth of God, declared in his word, and with the honour and purity of his moral government. This would lead you to perceive the necessity of an atonement, and the insufficiency of any atonement, but that, which, the Lamb of God has made by the sacrifice of himself \*, and that the efficacy even of *his* mediation depends

\* Heb. ix. 26.

upon

upon his divine character. The scriptural doctrines, of the depravity of man, the malignity of sin, the eternal power and Godhead of the Saviour, the necessity and efficacy of his mediation, and the inevitable, extreme, and endless misery, of those who finally reject him, are so closely connected, that if the first be rightly understood, it will open the mind to the reception of the rest. But till the first be known and felt, the importance and certainty of the others will be suspected, if not openly denied.

Though the doctrines I have enumerated, are, in these sceptical days, too generally disputed and contradicted, I am fully confident, that it is impossible to demonstrate them to be false. Upon the lowest supposition, therefore, they possibly *may be* true; and the consequences, depending upon them, if they should be found true at last, are so vastly momentous, that even the peradventure, the possibility of their truth, render them deserving of your most serious consideration. Trifle with yourselves no longer. If they be truths, they are the truths of God. Upon the same authority stands the truth of that gracious promise, that he will give his holy

Spirit to them that ask him. Let me entreat you to make the experiment. This is the proper point to begin with. Instead of indulging reasonings and speculations, humble yourselves before the Lord, and pray for the light and influence, which, he has said, he will afford to them who are willing to be taught. Read the scripture with deliberation, and do not labour to fortify yourselves against conviction. Break off from those practices, which your own consciences admonish you, cannot be pleasing, to him, who, is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. *Then shall you know, if you will sincerely follow on, to know the Lord* \*. But if not, if you will, in a spirit of levity, presume to decide upon points, which you will not allow yourselves seriously to examine, should you, at last, perish in your obstinacy and unbelief, your ruin will be of yourselves. You have been faithfully warned, and we shall be clear of your blood.

\* Hof. vi. 3.

# S E R M O N L.

THE UNIVERSAL CHORUS.

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REV. V. 13.

[*And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying,] Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

**M**EN; have generally agreed, to dignify their presumptuous and arrogant disquisitions on the works and ways of God, with the name of *wisdom*; though the principles upon which they proceed, and the conclusions which they draw from them, are, for the most part, evident proofs of their depravity and folly: Instead of admiring the  
*effects*

*effects* of his wisdom and power in the creation, they have rashly endeavoured to investigate the manner of its production. A variety of hypotheses have been invented, to account for the formation of the world, and to state the laws by which the frame of nature is governed ; and these different and inconsistent accounts, have been defended, with a magisterial tone of certainty, and an air of demonstration, by their respective authors, as though they had been by-standers and spectators, when God spoke all things into being, and produced order out of confusion, by the word of his power. They have, however, been much more successful in shewing the absurdity of the schemes proposed by others, than in reconciling their own, to the sober dictates of plain, common sense.

But, if by indulging their speculations on the creation of the world, the causes of the deluge, and similar subjects, their employment has been no better, than *weaving spiders webs* ; the result of their reasoning on morals, has been much worse. Here they have, with much industry, *hatched cockatrice eggs* \* ; and their labours have been not only

\* Isa. lix. 5.

fallacious, but mischievous. Their metaphysical researches, while they refuse the guidance of revelation, if pursued to their just consequences, will always lead into the labyrinths of scepticism, weaken the sense of moral obligation, rob the mind of the most powerful motives of right conduct, and of the only consolations, which, can afford it solid support, in an hour of trouble. One insuperable difficulty which they *will* undertake to solve, though it does not properly lie in their way, is concerning the origin of evil. That evil is in the world, is felt and confessed universally. The gospel points out an effectual method of deliverance from it; but, alas, the simple and infallible remedy is neglected, and men weary themselves with vain enquiries,

*And find no end, in wand'ring mazes lost.*

The more they reason, the more they involve themselves in uncertainty and error, till at last they make lies their refuge, and adopt, with implicit credulity, as so many undoubted axioms, opinions, which are equally dishonourable to God, and contradictory to truth and experience\*. Thus much

\* 2 Thes. ii. 11.

is certain, that by the occasion of evil, the character of God is manifested, with superior glory, to the view of angels and men, who are in a state of holiness and allegiance, and an higher accent is thereby given to their praises. For now his justice and his mercy, which could not have been otherwise known, are revealed in the strongest light; and the redemption of sinners, affords the brightest display of his wisdom and love.

The redeemed are represented as taking the first part in this sublime song, verse 8—10. The angels join in the chorus, verse 11, 12. which now becomes universal. All the angels, all the saints upon the earth, in the state of the dead, or *hades*, whether their bodies are buried under the earth, or in the sea, with one heart, aim and voice, unite in worship and praise. In the preceding verse, *Blessing, and honour, and glory and power*, are ascribed unto the Lamb; but here, the ascription is *unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb*. I shall not add to what I have already observed to you from the words of the doxology. A few remarks, which offer from this verse, taken in connection with the former, will bring me to a

con-



conclusion of the whole subject. And oh! for a coal of fire from the heavenly altar, to warm your hearts and mine, that our love, joy and gratitude may be awakened into lively exercise, and that the close of our meditations on *the Messiah*, may leave us deeply impressed with desires, and well-grounded hopes, of meeting ere long before the throne, to join, with the angels and the redeemed, in singing the praise of God and the Lamb!

I. The Lord Jesus is not only the head of the church redeemed from among men, but of the whole intelligent creation, that is in willing subjection to God. It belonged to his great design *to gather together in one\**; (to reduce under one head, as the Greek expression is) even in himself, *all things that are in heaven, and upon earth*. He is the Lord and the life both of angels, and of men. Mutability and dependance are essential to the state of creatures, however exalted; and the angels in glory owe, their preservation and confirmation, in holiness and happiness, to him. Hence they are styled the *elect angels* †, in distinction from those who left their first habitation, and sunk into sin and

\* Eph. i. 10.

† 1 Tim. v. 21.

misery. Angels, therefore, constitute a branch of that great family, which is named of him, in heaven and earth. And having made peace by the blood of his cross, he has effected a reconciliation, not only between God and sinners, but also between angels and men. How, those inhabitants of light, are disposed to sinful men, considered as sinful, we may learn from many passages of scripture. They are devoted to God, filled with zeal for his honour, and wait but for his command to execute vengeance upon his enemies. When Herod, infatuated by his pride, and by the flattery of the multitude, received their idolatrous compliment with complacence, *an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory* \*. The pestilence which destroyed the people, towards the end of David's reign, was under the direction of an angel †, and David saw him with his arm stretched out against Jerusalem. And in this prophecy, angels are spoken of, as employed in pouring forth the vials of wrath upon the earth. And still they are ready, we may believe, to avenge their Maker's cause upon the wicked, when they are commissioned.

\* Acts xii. 23.

† 2 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17.

And

And if the history of modern times was written by an inspired pen, and events, as in the scriptures, were assigned to their proper causes, perhaps, the death of many a haughty worm would be recorded in words to this effect—*And an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory.* But, viewing sinners as the subjects of redemption, the angels copy from their Lord. They regard them with benevolence, and rejoice over every one that repenteth \*. They willingly attend on them, and assist them, in ways beyond our conception. They esteem believers in Jesus as their fellow-servants †. We have reason to think, that they are present in our worshipping assemblies ; and, perhaps, always so present, that they could discover themselves to us in a moment, were it consistent with the rules of the divine government, established in this lower world, suited to the state of those who are to walk by faith, not by sight. Thus far, however differing in other respects, the angels and the redeemed, are united and related in one common head, and have fellowship in worship and service. When sinners are enabled,

\* Heb. i. 14.

† Rev. xxii. 9.

by grace, to renounce this world, they are admitted, to an honourable alliance, with a better.

II. From hence, we may form some judgment of the true nature and high honour of that spiritual worship, which is the privilege and glory of the church of God, under the gospel dispensation. When we meet in the name of Jesus, as his people, and with a due observance of his institutions, we come to the *innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first born* \*, the first born ones, (for the expression is plural.) We draw nigh, by faith, to the very gate of heaven, to the holiest of all. Men, unacquainted with spirituality, are soon weary even of the form of worship, unless their minds are amused by a splendid ceremonial. The first rise, and subsequent increase, of that pomp and pageantry, which, in some countries, has quite obscured the simplicity and beauty of gospel worship, is to be ascribed to this indisposition of the human mind. Our thoughts, while we are in a natural state, are too weak and wavering, and too gross, to be pleased with a worship,

\* Heb. xii. 22, 23.

in which, there is nothing suited to affect the imagination by sensible objects. And, therefore, when men think themselves wise, and profess to despise the pageantry which captivates the vulgar, their wisdom affords them no real advantage, if they have nothing better to substitute, in the room of what they reject as insignificant. The very appearance of devotion will languish, they will grow remiss, and neglect the sabbath and public assemblies, for want of something to keep up their attention. We have abundant proof of this, in our own land, and at this time. Protestants pride themselves in not being papists, but, when the protestant religion is understood to mean no more, than a renunciation of the superstitious ceremonies of the church of Rome, it is, with respect to individuals, little, if at all, better than popery itself. Among us enlightened protestants, no expedient but preaching the gospel of Christ, will be found sufficient to retain people in a stated observance of the Lord's day. But true believers, who understand and love the gospel, do indeed draw nigh to God; and they account *a day in his courts*

*better than a thousand* \*, because they can take a part in the songs of heaven, and, in spirit and in truth, worship him *that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb who redeemed them to God by his blood*. They know by happy experience, that his promise, to be in the midst of those who assemble in his name, is truth. Their worship is not a mere bodily service, a lifeless form, a round of observances, which neither warm the heart, nor influence the conduct; but they are instructed, comforted and strengthened, by waiting upon God. Their spiritual senses are exercised; they *behold* his glory in the glass of the gospel, they *hear* his voice, they *feel* an impression of his power and presence, they *taste* his goodness, and the virtue of that name which is as ointment poured forth, *perfumes* their tempers and conversation.

III. Though the Lamb is worthy of all blessing, and honour, and glory, and power; there is a distinct ascription of praise, to him that sitteth upon the throne.

The scripture, which alone can teach us to form right conceptions of God, and to

\* Ps. lxxxiv. 10.

worship him acceptably, guides us in a medium, between opposite errors and mistakes. Too many persons, ignorant of their own state as sinners, and of the awful majesty and holiness of the Most High, presume to think of him, to speak of him, and, in their way, to speak to him, without being aware of the necessity of a Mediator. But they who are without Christ, who is the only door and way to the Father, are without God, atheists in the world \*. There is a mistake likewise on the other hand, when, though the Deity of the Saviour be acknowledged, yet, what we are taught of the ineffable distinction in the Godhead, is not duly attended to. It is written, *In the beginning,—the Word was God †*. It is likewise written, *The Word was with God*. This latter expression undoubtedly has a meaning, which, though perfectly consistent, is not co-incident, with the former. The truth contained in it, is proposed, not to our *curiosity*, as a subject of speculation, but to our faith. I do not attempt to explain it. But, what God expressly declares, we are bound, upon the principles of right reason, to believe. For he is Truth,

\* Eph. ii. 12.

† John i. 1.

and cannot deceive us. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the holy Spirit* \*. These three are frequently spoken of in the scripture—to each of them a distinct part in the œconomy of salvation is ascribed; to each of them the perfections and honours of Deity are attributed. Yet there are not three Gods, but one. Consequently, these three are one God. This doctrine may be above our comprehension, but cannot be contrary to our reason, if it be contained in a revelation from God. If it be simply received, upon the authority of the Revealer, it approves itself to be true, for it is found to be a key to the whole scripture, which renders the general sense, and scope, every where consistent and plain. They who proudly reject it, and yet admit the Bible to be a divine revelation, are involved in difficulties from which all their sagacity and learning cannot free them. In vain they labour by singular interpretations, by the minutiae of criticism, and by an appeal to various readings, and ancient versions, which, in a few passages, differ from the copies more generally received—in vain

\* 1 John v. 7.

they



they endeavour, by these refinements, to relieve themselves; when pressed by the obvious and natural sense of a thousand texts, which confirm the faith and hope of plain christians. The gospel is designed for the poor. But the poor and unlearned, would be at a great disadvantage, if the scripture could not be rightly understood, without the assistance of such learning, and such criticism, as we often see pressed into the service. But the holy Spirit graciously leads those who pray for his teaching, into such views of this high subject, as are sufficient to comfort their hearts, and to animate their obedience. The faith of those who are taught of God, is exercised in their approaches to him, under two different modifications. Both are scriptural, and therefore both are safe, and witnessed to by his gracious acceptance and blessing.

1. They come to God *by* Christ. They have access through him \*. Unworthy to speak for themselves, they bow their knees in his name †. Christians are sufficiently distinguished and described by saying, *They come to God by him ‡*. They come to God,

\* Eph. ii. 18.      † Phil. ii. 10.      ‡ Heb. vii. 25.

they cannot live without him in the world, as they once did. They are now conscious of wants and desires, which only God can satisfy. But they are conscious likewise that they are sinners, and therefore they durst not approach him, if they had not the invitation of his promise, and an assurance of *an Advocate with the Father* \*.

2. They come to God, *in Christ*. He is the great Temple, in whom the All-fulness dwells †; and they are not afraid of idolatry, when they worship and honour the Son, even as the Father. This distinct application to God, in the person of the Son of his love, perhaps, becomes more frequent and familiar, as they advance in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour ‡. They, who seek to him for deliverance from sin and misery, at first, I believe, chiefly consider him, as the Advocate and High Priest, who, by the virtue of his atonement, and the prevalence of his intercession, is able to save to the uttermost. But when the apostle distributes christians, according to their growth in grace, into the state of babes, young men,

\* 1 John ii. 1.

† Col. i. 19. and ii. 9.

‡ 2 Pet. iii. 18.

and

and fathers \*, he speaks of a more distinct and appropriate knowledge of him, who is from the beginning, as the peculiar privilege, and distinguishing attainment of the fathers. He speaks of him that is from the beginning, so often, that we can be at no loss to determine whom he intends by the expression. He applies it to him who was in the beginning with God †, and whom he and the other apostles had heard, had seen with their eyes, and touched with their hands ‡. An eminent divine § points out some especial seasons in the christian life, in which, he thinks, the peculiar pressures of the soul may obtain the most sensible and immediate relief, by direct application to the Saviour. But there are some believers, who find themselves, almost continually, in one or other of the situations, which he marks as occasional. However this may be, I am ready to take it for granted, that they who really and cordially believe the Deity of Christ, do, at least at some seasons, and upon some occasions, expressly direct their prayers to him. If precedents be required to warrant this practice,

\* 1 John ii. 14. † John i. 1. ‡ 1 John i. 1—3.

§ Owen in his Christologia.

the New Testament will furnish them in abundance. I shall select but a few. The apostle Paul *bowed his knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus*, but he often prayed to the Lord Jesus. He prayed to *him* in the temple \*, and when he obtained that answer, *My grace is sufficient for thee †*. To him, the prayer of the apostles and disciples was addressed, previous to the lot, which was to determine a successor to Judas ‡. And to him Stephen committed his departing spirit ||, an act of trust and worship of the highest kind, and at the most solemn season. In short, it is a strange inconsistency, if any, who acknowledge his Deity, question the propriety of praying to him. What is it, more or less, than to question the propriety of praying to God?

IV. This solemn worship and praise, is referred, ultimately, to him who sitteth upon the throne. To the great and glorious God, thus known and manifested, in and by, and with the Lamb that was slain,

The mediatorial kingdom of Christ, will have a period. He will reign as Mediator,

\* Acts xxii. 17—21.      † 2 Cor. xii. 9.      ‡ Acts  
i. 24.      || Acts vii. 59.

till he has subdued all enemies under his feet, and perfected his whole work. Then his kingdom, in this sense, will cease. He will deliver it up to the Father, *that God may be all in all* \*. This passage is difficult, that is, the subject is too great, for our faculties, in their present state of imperfection, fully to comprehend. For the difficulties we meet with in scripture, are, more properly, to be ascribed to our ignorance. The Son, as man, is even now subject to the Father. And God is undoubtedly all in all, at present, and from everlasting to everlasting. But his kingdom, here, is to be taken, figuratively, for the subjects of his kingdom, his people, whom he received as a trust and a treasure. These he will deliver up, and the form of his administration and government over them, will be changed. They will then have no more sins to confess, there will be no more dangers requiring the care and tenderness of a Shepherd, no enemies to be controlled, and the ordinances and means of grace, accommodated to their wants and weakness, while in this world, will be no longer necessary. But MESSIAH, the Lamb

\* 1 Cor. xv. 28.

that

that was slain, will ever be the Head, and Lord of the creation, the medium of communication of the light and love of God to his people ; and God in him, the object of their eternal adoration and praise.

Then the grand, ultimate, final cause of all the manifestations of God, will be completely obtained. The glory of the great Creator and Lawgiver, the splendor of all his perfections, will for ever shine, without a veil or cloud, and with a brightness which could not have been known, by creatures, had not the entrance of evil, given occasion for a display of his wisdom and love, in overruling it to the praise of his glorious grace.

Thus, according to the measure of my ability and experience, I have endeavoured to point out to you the meaning and importance of the well-chosen series of scriptural passages, which are set to music in the Oratorio of *the Messiah*. Great is the Lord MESSIAH, and greatly to be praised ! I have attempted to set before you a sketch, of what the scripture teaches us, concerning his person, undertakings and success ; the misery of those whom he came to save, the happiness to  
which

which he raises them, and the wonderful plan and progress of redeeming love. But who is sufficient for these things? Alas! how small a portion of his ways are we able to trace! But I would be thankful, that the desire of attempting this great subject was put into my heart, and that having obtained help of God, I have been preserved and enabled to finish my design. Imperfect as my execution of it has been, I cannot doubt that the various topics, I have been led to insist on, are the great truths of God. For what is properly my own, the defects and weaknesses, which mix with my best services, I entreat his forgiveness, and request your candour. But I do not hesitate to say, that the substance of what I have advanced, deserves and demands your very serious attention.

It is probable, that those of my hearers, who admire this Oratorio, and are often present when it is performed, may think me harsh and singular in my opinion, that of all our musical compositions, this is the most improper for a public entertainment. But while it continues to be equally acceptable, whether performed in a church, or in the theatre, and while the greater part of the

per-

performers and of the audience, are the same at both places, I can rate it no higher, than as one of the many fashionable amusements, which mark the character of this age of dissipation. Though the subject be serious and solemn, in the highest sense, yea, for that very reason, and though the music is, in a striking manner, adapted to the subject, yet, if the far greater part of the people who frequent the Oratorio, are evidently unaffected by the Redeemer's love, and uninfluenced by his commands, I am afraid, it is no better, than a profanation of the name and truths of God, a crucifying the Son of God afresh. You must judge for yourselves. If you think differently from me, you will act accordingly.—Yet, permit me to hope and to pray, that the next time you hear *the Messiah*, God may bring something that you have heard in the course of these sermons, nearly connected with the peace and welfare of your souls, effectually to your remembrance.

I would humbly hope, that some persons, who were strangers to the power and grace of MESSIAH, when I entered upon this service, are now desirous of seeking him with their whole hearts. Yes, I trust I have not  
laboured



laboured wholly in vain. The gospel is *the rod of his strength* \*, which, when accompanied by the power of his Spirit, produces greater effects than the wonder-working rod of Moses. It causes the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dead to live. A faithful minister, will account a single instance of success, a rich recompense for the labour of a life. May this joy be mine! May the Lord encourage you to go on seeking him. Then he will surely be found of you. An open door is set before you †, and if you are truly willing to enter, none shall be able to shut it.

But may I not fear, that I am still speaking to others, who, to this hour, have no cordial admiring thoughts of the great Saviour? Alas! should you die in your present frame of mind, let me, once more, entreat you to consider, what *your* situation and employment will be, when all his redeemed people, and all his holy angels, shall join in worshipping and praising him, in the great day of his appearance. Unless you repent, lay down your arms, and submit to his golden sceptre, your doom is al-

\* Ps. cx. 2.

† Rev. iii. 8.

ready pronounced. Awful are the words of the Lord, by the prophet, and very applicable to your case, if (which may his mercy prevent!) you should die in your sins. *Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit* \*. If the Scribes and Pharisees were filled with envy and grief, when the children, in the temple, sung, Hosanna to the Son of David †; what must be their anguish and remorse, their rage and despair, when the *whole creation* shall join in his praise? If your thoughts of him now, are like theirs, tremble at your danger, for unless you repent, your lot must be with them hereafter.

\* Isa. lxxv. 13, 14.

† Matt. xxi. 15.

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