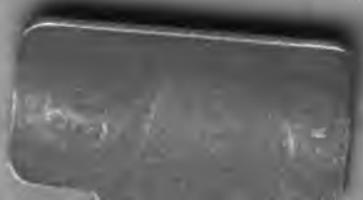


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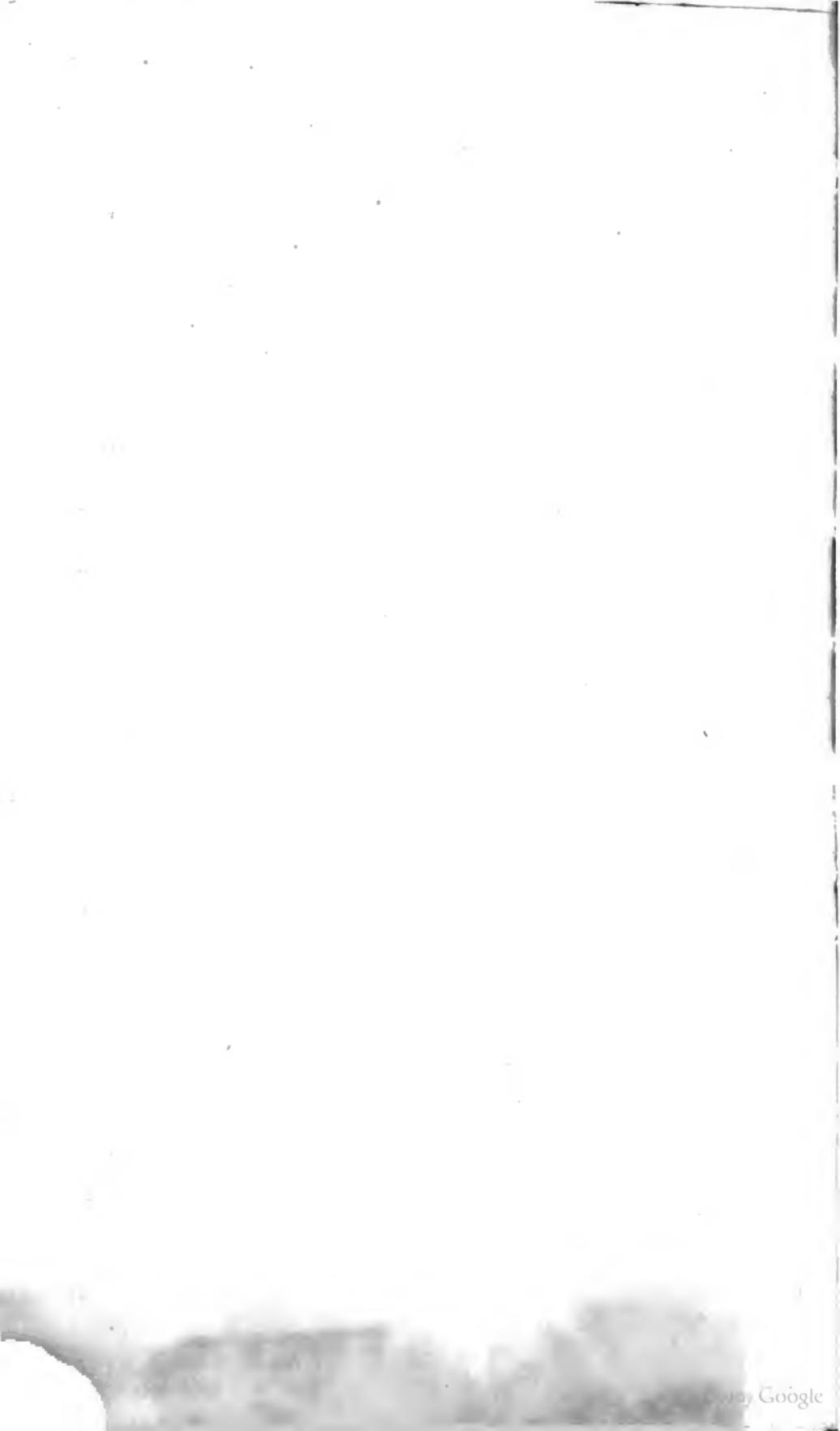


MRS. C. H. &  
MRS. S. V. V. HUNTINGTON

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THE  
COMPLETE  
**DUTY OF MAN :**

OR,  
A SYSTEM  
OF  
DOCTRINAL & PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY.

To which are added,  
FORMS OF PRAYER AND OFFICES OF DEVOTION FOR THE  
VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES IN LIFE.

BY H. VENN, A.M.  
RECTOR OF YELLING, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE  
EARL OF BUCHAN.

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Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the  
WHOLE DUTY OF MAN. Eccl. xii. 13.

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## PREFACE.

**F**AITH in Christ, whatever disputes may have been raised about its nature, is allowed on all hands to be a capital doctrine of the gospel, and essential to a Christian.

In full agreement with the great lights of the primitive church, our own, and all the reformed ones, I understand by it a dependence upon Christ for righteousness and strength, as having paid to the justice of God full satisfaction for his broken law, and obtained acceptance for all believers in his name, to the reward of eternal life. Should an explanation of this point, now it seems so offensive to many, be demanded, the following is humbly submitted to consideration.

Sin is the transgression of God's law, which, so soon as broken, subjects us to its penalty. The first sin of the first man is a decisive proof of this truth, standing in the front of the Bible, a perpetual important lesson of instruction to mankind, in a point which otherwise could not have been known by them; and which, notwithstanding the solemnity of its delivery, they are always apt to overlook. But this fact ought very particularly to be considered, because designed to give us a clear insight into the nature of God, and the nature of sin, and as a key to the subsequent discoveries of scripture. For if the sin of eating the forbidden fruit, involving in its fatal consequences the whole human race, could not be pardoned, we may fairly presume, sin has always the same nature in the eyes of an unchangeable God. Therefore, every sin, as an act of disobedience and rebellion against him, must be the object of his displeasure at all times, and for ever separate from him every soul of man in whom it is found unpardoned and unpurged.

This gives an alarming view of our condition under sin, immediately exciting this question, How are sinners to be restored to the favour of God? An inquiry, of all others the most important. And you are again desired to keep your eye fixed upon the scripture character of God, his holiness, or hatred of sin, and inflexible will to punish it, remembering, at the same time, that every act of disobedience has the same accursed nature with the first, and as certainly exposes the offender to condemnation.

If you refuse to admit this awful account of the nature of sin, and of God, because contrary to the idea you have framed of him, and derogatory, as you fancy, to his perfections, you are then required to prove under what age of the world, or in what part of scripture you find it recorded, that God has revoked his decree against sin, and made a change in the law given to man at his creation. This was, life upon obedience, and, in case of transgression, death. The scripture, on the contrary, in perfect harmony with itself, acquaints us, that at the second promulgation of the law, God appeared in the same majesty and sovereignty, and with the same denunciation of wrath against sinners, as he did at the beginning. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." On which we may observe, by the way, that as more than temporal death was necessarily implied in the threatening and curse to the Jews, because that, they knew, was the unavoidable doom of all mankind, whether they obeyed or not; so it naturally suggests to us, that the first threatening, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was of the same extent, and its meaning precisely determined by it.

However, in the second there is no relaxation of the first; no contrary declaration concerning the case of offenders, nor the least intimation of any change in the will of God with respect to sin. Indeed, such a variation or inconsistency in the character of God, as given by himself, would be an argument of infinitely greater force than any yet alleged against the truth of the Bible.

The *fact* then is certain ; the wages of sin is death, and always will be so, while God remains unchangeable. What he published by his first covenant, in the person of Adam given to all mankind, he renewed and confirmed by the delivery of the law of Moses, which, as St Paul observes, Gal. iii. 19, "was added because of transgressions, that their desert might be known, that the offence might abound," Rom. v. In its penalty and curse unto death, now once more solemnly awarded against every offender, and every offence.

Besides these two grand manifestations of the nature and will of God, the evil of sin, and the manner in which it is to be treated, we know of *no* other. And both are exemplified in the judgments recorded throughout scripture, especially in the death of Christ, as so many confirmations of God's unalterable purpose of dealing with sinners according to those declarations. Very striking and awful indeed they are. Yet here we must rest the point for ever, unless we would take upon us, as we do from one age to another, with horrid presumption, to estimate the guilt of sin from our own false notions of it, to prescribe a law to God, to divest him of his supreme dominion, to cavil at his wisdom, and dethrone his justice.

But let the reason of man, short as it is, be judge in this cause. The decree is gone out from the Almighty, and stands unrepealed in the revelation he has made of himself : "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Suppose now, for a moment, we are at liberty to call his decree in question, and make allowance for some sin. What is that sin ? And if for one, why not two or more, and where will you stop ? If once you take it out of God's hands, there will be no end of pleading for transgression, no dread of it, no sense of good and evil, no submission to God's authority, no obedience upon earth. The conclusion is evident, if all have sinned, all stand condemned by the sentence of a just God.

The covenant of redemption, in which mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other, and God is

both just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, is not here to be fully opened. We are now to prove the necessity of dependence for salvation on the death and righteousness of Christ, from the preceding account of God's unalterable justice, and from the guilt of sin being in all ages the same. And unless we are declared free from that guilt, and invested with a title to eternal life, how can we be saved? If we have not righteousness in ourselves, where must we look for it, but as existing solely in the person of Jesus Christ? Dependence, therefore, upon that righteousness as appointed by God for sinners to confide in, is the precious faith of the gospel by which the just live, and live eternally. As no other will reconcile the divine attributes, or answer the exigencies of mankind, concluded under sin, and always sinners, so nothing else must be the ground of our hope towards God.

*Not works.* Alas! we have none that will bear to be weighed in God's balance, or answer the demands of his justice. Be fair and honest here, as it is a matter of life and death. Then examine what you think your best action, or the most excellent grace in your soul. Bring it to the touchstone, the straight rule of the commandment, which reaches the heart and all its motions. In the matter or manner, principle or end, be assured, you will find some grievous flaw in it, and condemnation your desert, instead of reward. Let Hooker, whose judgment or piety none ever questioned, who have studied his writings, be heard on this head. "If God, (said he), should make us an offer thus large—Search all the generations of men since the fall of our first father Adam; find one man that hath done one action which hath passed from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all; and for that one man's only action, neither man nor angel shall feel the torments which are prepared for both. Do you think that this ransom to deliver men and angels could be found among the sons of men?"—*Discourse on Justification.*

*Not Sincerity.* This has been long adopted into our divinity, as if it were the gracious condition of the new covenant, in

opposition to the law of perfect obedience. But it is no where mentioned in scripture as such. Yet so great a variation, in a matter of vast importance, from every other revelation God has been pleased to make of himself, and the way of acceptance with him, need be very distinctly and strongly marked. But when we call for scripture proof, none is produced. It is indeed altogether a claim of human invention, an acknowledged defect of obedience. Consequently an absolute forfeiture, delivering us up to justice, so long as the law of perfect obedience stands in full force against us. And let the reader determine, after what has been said, whether that law was not designed to be a perpetual standard of the only obedience God will accept from man as his duty, or how and when it was abrogated.

*Not Faith and Works*, considered as co-operating to our justification, and both together making our claim to acceptance; for works which have the nature of sin, and are confessed to have it by those who call in the aid of faith to supply their imperfection, must be excluded from any share in our justification, because the grand difficulty still remains. Justice must be satisfied, and the law fulfilled; with all our duties sin is mixed, and our case desperate as to this remedy, unless the new covenant be supposed a relaxation of every preceding one in respect of God's judgment of sin, and that, now in this last age of the world, he has revealed himself as acting under a dispensing power, and discharging sin of its guilt.

But this is a dangerous expedient without warrant from reason or scripture. By scripture we are taught our whole deliverance from the curse of the law; and the answer of a good conscience to its demands, is the righteousness of Christ, satisfying the divine justice, and to the praise of the glory of his grace imputed to sinners for salvation. This is the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, full security, our first and *only* justification.

The notion of a *first* and *second* is the offspring of pride, opposing the truth of God. For surely these justifiers of themselves make no account of the justice of God, as still existing in all its rigour, but substitute instead of perfection what falls

infinitely short of it. Yet the nature of God, and of sin, remains always the same ; consequently we are as much undone as ever, if gospel grace extends no farther than to the first benefit of forgiveness, when we are admitted into the Christian covenant. This is dropping faith at the beginning of our conversion, as a thing of no farther use. On the contrary, we are assured the just shall *live* by faith, not once but always, in every step of his progress, at the hour of death, and the day of judgment. It is not meant, that faith has any such effect merely as a work and righteousness of *our own*. No, it consists in a denial of the merits of all works, qualifications, or habits in man. Its essence is unfeigned submission to the righteousness of God, and entire dependence upon it as freely given to us. Which may furnish an answer to those who ask, why may not imperfect works justify, as well as imperfect faith ? supposing truly that one is no more perfect than the other. The reason is, that the sole eternal condition of justification by works is their perfection ; consequently a claim founded on them must either be made good, or wholly relinquished. Whereas faith, though it may be weak and imperfect, instead of exalting itself against the justice of God, and standing before him in the confidence of a lie, puts all from itself, giving the whole glory of salvation where it is due.

We shall close this argument with observing, that faith is not understood, much less possessed, if it produce not more holiness than could possibly be any other way attained. The charge of vacating the law, as a rule of life, followed close upon the first preaching of salvation by faith ; and a base suspicion of its being prejudicial to the interests of virtue is hardly ever rooted out of the minds of men, till they themselves experience the power of faith. But this can have no weight with those who remember the decision our Lord has made on this point, in opposition to the conceit of a proud pretending Pharisee ; *to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little ;* Luke vii. 47.

## PREFACE.

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We acknowledge, we strenuously maintain the heart of man is exceedingly depraved. But you extend this matter beyond all bounds, and charge much greater corruption upon fallen man than you are aware of, when you suppose the superabundant love of God, manifested in the plan of redemption, can kindle no love, and excite no gratitude. On the contrary, it is the peculiar honour of gospel grace, that it humbles every believer in the dust, fills him with just apprehensions of the sinfulness of sin, raises him from his dead state, to establish him in the truth of obedience from love to God, and holy admiration of his adorable perfections. And if the gospel be not thus effectual, through the Holy Ghost, to every sinner who really believes it; if the love of the ever-blessed Trinity does not put all the powers of the soul in motion to make some suitable returns, our condition is indeed hopeless. And we may venture to affirm that a zeal for works truly Christian can be built on no other foundation; and that a desire to perfect holiness will never take place in the heart of man, but under a sense of redeeming grace, and the great salvation it sets before us.

A neglect, and even avowed contempt of this doctrine is the characteristic of our age, and the gospel motive to obedience we in general cease to inculcate, though we call ourselves Christians. But in vain do we attempt to revive the decayed spirit of religion, and establish a pure morality on any other than scripture grounds. A spurious kind of it, outward, partial, chiefly founded on love of reputation, with little regard to God, nature itself can discern, and in some measure attain. Poor, mean attainment! Yet nature is most unreasonably prone to substitute this in the place of inward and spiritual religion, to which it is altogether averse. But true holiness, that is, profound self-abasement and subjection to the Father of Spirits, from love of his nature and will, with ardent longings after purity of heart, is the genuine product of lively faith, and I say again,

no where to be found, till the ever-blessed name of Jesus, his grace and his truth, his compassionate heart, dying love, and all-perfect obedience, are the meditation, delight, and confidence of the soul towards God.

Upon these principles, I have endeavoured to delineate the Complete Duty of Man. The book bears this title, not from any arrogant conceit the author holds of its worth, but from its comprehending the doctrines, as well as the precepts peculiar to the church of God; from its placing things in their proper order, and preparing the way to Christian practice, by Christian faith, and to faith by conviction of sin. The Whole Duty of Man, so called, has been long in possession of general esteem, and is to be found in most families. But it is evident that celebrated treatise wants the great thing needful to obtain the very end for which it was written; since Christ the lawgiver will always speak in vain, without Christ the Saviour is first known. Christian morality is produced and maintained by this principle—We love God, because he first loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. All treatises, therefore, written to promote holiness of life, must be deplorably defective, unless the cross of Christ be laid as the foundation, constantly kept in view, and every duty enforced, as having relation to the Redeemer. This is the apostle's doctrine, and method of inculcating Christian obedience; and all other is Pharisaical, or only a more refined species of self-righteousness.

It is proper to apprise the reader, that in the chapters on repentance, there are some paragraphs taken from Mr. Dickinson's letters; and in those chapters on the foundation of faith, several fine sentiments from Mr. Maclaurin's Sermon on the Glory of the Cross of Christ. In a few other places, where a masterly argument or beautiful illustration upon the subject occurred, I have taken the liberty of enriching with it my own work.

I have nothing further to add, but my earnest request to the Fountain of all good, that it may please him to make the follow-

ing sheets useful. Useful to give the reader knowledge of his glorious name—and a conviction of human ignorance, guilt, and depravity, which may endear the name of the Redeemer, and create humility of mind, with tender compassion towards each other. Useful, to make evident the pardon, strength, peace, and righteousness, which ennoble all who have scriptural faith in Christ—that both formal and deistical religion may appear the despicable things they are, and an earnest expectation be excited in all who read this volume, of beholding the meridian glory of Christianity in heaven, where every creature breaks forth in fervent acknowledgment of infinite obligation, saying, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

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THE  
DUTY OF MAN,  
&c.

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SUNDAY I.

CHAP. I.

On the excellent Worth of the Soul.

**I**T is evident man is made with an active principle entirely distinct from his body. For this is chained down to a spot of earth, no more than a mass of unconscious matter. But his soul can expatiate in contemplation, reflection, and, with infinite variety, compare the numberless objects which present themselves before it. When his body has attained maturity, his soul arrives not to perfection, but increases in wisdom and knowledge; and when the feeble body is sinking in decay, the soul is often full of vigour, and feels joy or anguish all its own.

To demonstrate the worth of the soul, so admirable in its properties, will be of great use: because *all* that the term religion comprehends respects the soul. And many precepts in the word of God must be judged unreasonable, or prove irksome, till the salvation of the soul is known to be the greatest good man can attain; the loss of it the greatest evil he can suffer.

To prove this point, I shall make my appeal to observation and scripture, entirely waving all abstract reasoning about the nature of the soul.\*

Experience then powerfully proves the excellent worth of the soul. For what is the case of thousands around you, if it has not already been your own? Are they not mourning over some tender parent, near relation, or affectionate friend? How greatly did they value the dear deceased! How useful, or how entertaining! Perhaps the head, the comfort of the whole family—perhaps in the prime of life and beauty. Behold the sudden, bitter, prodigious transformation! The desirable object is become a putrid mass, insufferably loathsome, fit only for the grave. Do you ask how, in so small a space of time, what was before admired should become hideous even to look on? The answer loudly proclaims the excellent worth of the soul. For could the dead parent, relation, or friend, speak to you on the subject, his answer would be to this effect:

Afflicted and surprised, you bewail, with tears of tenderness, the frightful change you see in a form long so familiar and pleasing to you. Know the cause. The immortal inhabitant which lodged for a few years under this roof of flesh is gone. My soul, by its presence, gave life, motion, and beauty to my body. The instant the one took its destined flight, the other began to turn into an offensive carcase, which must moulder into dust, and

\* Our inquiries about the nature of the soul (says Lord Bacon) must be bound over at last to religion, for otherwise they still lie open to many errors. For since the substance of the soul was not deduced from the mass of heaven and earth, but immediately from God, how can the knowledge of the reasonable soul be derived from philosophy? It must be drawn from the same inspiration from whence its substance first flowed. *Advancement of Learning*. book iv. ch. 3.

dust remain, till his voice, who is the resurrection and the life, unites it for ever with its former inmate.

From this striking difference between a dear parent, relation, or friend, active, useful, entertaining, and the cold pale piece of outcast earth he instantly becomes upon the departure of his soul into eternity, understand what must be its excellent worth.

From observing this fact, daily passing before our eyes, turn to the page given by inspiration of God. Nothing can be conceived more grand than the scripture account of the soul.

Look up to the heavens; immensely high, immeasurably wide as they are. God only spoke, and instantly, with all their host, they had their being. The earth, the sea, the air, with all their millions of inhabitants, were formed in the same manner. But before the human soul comes into being, a council of the Trinity is held. God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him," Gen. i. 26. 37. He formed his soul, in its moral faculties and powers, a sinless immortal image of himself.

To ruin so grand a being was an attempt equal to the execrable malice which Satan bore against God, and the favourite work of his hands. But no sooner did Satan bring the soul of Adam nigh to everlasting destruction, than the method used to recover it declared a second time, still more loudly the exceeding greatness of its worth. This must be granted, if you take a just survey of his majesty, who alone was sufficient to redeem it. Before him the countless multitudes which people the whole earth, with all their wealth and pomp, are less than nothing and vanity. Before his incomprehensible glory, the height of the mountains, and the unfath-

omable depth of the sea, the dimensions of the earth, and the circuit of the skies, are as the small dust of the balance. This is HE, behold him, behold him !\* who takes upon himself a work impossible for angels to effect, the redemption of the soul. He takes upon himself to replace it in union and communion with God ; not by the word of his mouth, as in the day when he made the heavens and the earth, but by a work infinitely costly ; by a process of many painful steps, each of them mysterious and astonishing to angels, as well as to men.

To redeem the soul, he is born of a poor virgin, in the likeness of sinful flesh ; he lives afflicted, insulted, oppressed above measure, till in his death he is made sin and a curse, offering up to the Father a divine obedience, and a death fully satisfactory to his broken law.

From considering duly who this Redeemer is, and what he hath done, you must conclude that every thing the world admires as excellent, or extols as valuable, is unspeakably mean, when put in the balance against the worth of the soul.

It is, indeed, a matter of the utmost difficulty to believe, that the word, who is God, did abase himself to the death of the cross, a ransom for the soul. Here reason is lost in the unfathomable mystery, and, if left to itself, leads to an obstinate denial of the fact. The means used to prevent this effect, full of blasphemy against God, and perdition to ourselves, forcibly proves the soul's excellent worth. For the same Eternal Spirit, which in the beginning brought

\* The reader is desired, as he would not injure the Redeemer by unworthy thoughts of his person, to meditate on the grand things Isaiah speaks of the Messiah. The 40th chapter, from whence the above description of his glory is extracted, puts it out of question, that he is the true God. The 6th, the 9th, and the 35th, each prove the same to demonstration.

light out of darkness, order and beauty out of chaos, comes down from heaven to attest this truth. He shall glorify me, saith Christ, "for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you," John xvi. 14. Displaying the glory of the person and work of the Redeemer who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Judge now what must be the soul's excellent worth, which originally was the offspring of God, and made in his image; then the purchase of the blood of his equal Son; and, at length, the pupil of the Holy Ghost, to be educated under his eye and influence for heaven. When nobility stoops to the office of a teacher, nothing beneath the heir of a kingdom is the scholar. How great then must be the worth of the soul, which has the Spirit of God for its appointed instructor and continual guide! Further, consider that height in glory, or dire extremity of woe, which must be the endless condition of every soul. Man, on revolting from God, was banished from all commerce with the blessed spirits of heaven. But when a few years have taken their flight, if salvation has been accepted, the soul shall be as the angels of God, clothed with a body refulgent like the sun; raised to a perfection exceeding our highest reach of thought, all its faculties infinitely surpassing in excellence the outward beauty with which it is arrayed. Now, as we always estimate the grandeur of a person from the exalted station he is born to bear, and the possessions he shall one day call his own, how amazingly great must the worth of the soul be, since, unless ruined by incorrigible contempt of God, it shall inherit the riches of eternity, minister before his throne, and drink of rivers of pleasures, which are at his right hand, for ever more!

On the other hand, the scripture account of their miseries, who perish, as strongly proves the same

truth, though it be distressing to consider their case. For if the soul be not admitted, through the Saviour's mediation, into heaven, O sad alternative ! its doom (like a sentence pronounced on offenders whose high distinction serves only to inflame their guilt) strikes us with horror. It must, indeed, be banished to an inconceivable distance from God, and separated by an impassable gulph. It must have him for the avenger of all its crimes, in comparison of whose strength, all created might is weaker than a new-born babe. That arm is to be stretched out against it which shoots the planets in their rounds, and taketh up the isles as a very little thing. The soul which perishes is to suffer punishment the same in kind with the avowed enemy of the blessed God, whose only aim, since his fall from heaven, has been to undermine and oppose Christ's kingdom ; who has already seduced souls without number, and will go on in enmity against his Maker, till eternal vengeance falls on his head. Though not in equal torment, yet in the same hell with this execrable being, the soul which perishes must endure the wrath to come.

Whether you regard, therefore, the felicity or ruin, one of which, in a few fleeting years, the soul must feel, you will find it hard to determine, which of the two most loudly declares its grandeur.

These evidences, obvious in the scripture page, demonstrate that the poorest beggar possesses a dignity in his own person greater, above expression, than all the world can give him. *The soul within*, by which he thinks, and reasons, and acts, surpasses in worth all the eye ever saw, or the fancy ever formed. Before one such immortal being, the magnificence even of the natural world is diminutive, because transient. All these things wax old, as doth a garment, and all the works of nature shall be burnt

up; but the years of the soul, in happiness or woe, like its Maker, remain unchangeable.

From considering, with due attention, these proofs of the excellent worth of the soul, you will understand the ground of that astonishing assertion, from the mouth of Christ, that in Heaven the seat of glory, and among angels, whose thought can never stoop to any thing low, "there is joy over one sinner that repenteth." You will understand why the Lord God almighty gives such solemn warnings, such pressing calls, such affectionate entreaties to sinful men, to bring them to feel a just concern for themselves. These things bear exact proportion to the worth of an immortal soul.



## SUNDAY II.

### CHAP. II.

The Knowledge of the Soul's excellent Worth necessarily  
to perform Christian Obedience.

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**NATURALLY** we pursue, which greediness, to gratifications of sense, and the things of time. When we enter on the stage of life, the amusements of folly and the pleasures of sin captivate us, as the chief, if not the only sources of delight. Hence youth are very shy of religion, notwithstanding its rich promises of present peace and joy, and of eternal life in the world to come. They regard it as a malevolent foe to their pleasures. But soon as they perceive the excellent worth of their souls, they supremely value

and earnestly pursue things unseen and eternal. Thus informed, every prejudice against religion ceases and the language even of youthful hearts is this :

“ The bloom of my days, and the vigour of my life, shall be directed to my best, my everlasting interest. A clear abiding conviction of my soul’s immortal nature, has delivered me from listening to the flattering solicitation of my lusts, and broken the magic force of their cruel enchantments.”

Through the several succeeding stages in life, no less than in youth, this knowledge is equally needful. Nothing less can with certainty be depended on, to preserve men inviolably honest amidst the temptations which abound in trade, and in every profession. For the coffee-house, the change, the university, with every private circle of company, pour out infectious discourse, and, by perpetual praise of wealth, inflame us with desires after it. Hence spring deceit and roguery, the diseases of trade, which ruin thousands. They are engendered by rage after money, as the chief good of men.

This wide-spread evil nothing can control, but a persuasion of the soul’s inestimable worth. Establish this, immediately every false defiling idea of gain and worldly prosperity appears in its folly and formity. Trade will then be carried on with temperance of affection ; an enlightened conscience, like a vigilant sentinel, will sound an alarm in every hour of danger, and enable the man of business to conquer what led him captive before. For to all that would lead him to transgress, he will naturally *now* say, as he feels, “ What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? and what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? ”

Further, the ground of real prayer, and success in it, entirely depends in knowledge of the soul’s worth.

Hypocrisy, in addresses from one man to another, is detestable; how much more in confessions or petitions before God? Yet prayer can be no better than hypocrisy, till the supplicant feels the worth of his immortal spirit. Wrath revealed against sin, deliverance from its dominion and defilement, supplies of grace and spiritual consolation, are empty sounds, till the salvation of the soul is our grand concern. For, in the nature of things, there can be no cries to God from the heart in prayer, where we apprehend no great misery, if we fail; nor hope for any considerable advantage, though crowned with success. We may, indeed, personate in a closet, or at church, a man in earnest seeking after God, by constantly using the prayers one of that character would pour out before him with the noblest sensibility. But till we are deeply conscious of the soul's worth, *we act a part* on our knees in secret, or at church, as much as players do upon the stage. We appear at certain times in a character no more our own, than what they assume on the theatre, is theirs. Hence multitudes, constantly engage in acts of devotion, remain grossly ignorant and utterly unaffected by every thing they profess to believe, and day by day *seem* to implore. Their confessions are deceitful, their prayers heartless, and their thanksgiving without gratitude. They are ridiculous to men of sense, the triumph of the profane, and an offence continually in the sight of God: for he must receive services just as they are; and where nothing but outward homage and fine words are offered up to him, nothing can be obtained. Sin is not pardoned, nor one evil temper subdued. All the fruit of such feigned intercourse with God is to flatter self-love, and harden men in presumption, till their hypocrisy be at once fully discovered, and punished as it deserves.

On the contrary, deep consciousness of your soul's worth will qualify you for every act of devotion. Godly sorrow for sin will attend confession of it, when lamented as an enemy to your immortal interest. With ardour and importunity you will implore grace and pardon, when their value are felt as inseparably connected with eternal life. Most hearty and lively will be your thanksgiving for spiritual mercies, when they are known to be absolutely necessary to prepare the soul for everlasting felicity, and save it from endless torments.

It follows, therefore, that in the same degree as we ought to value a preservative from iniquity, and the only possible incitement to use aright the solemn acts of devotion to which we are called, the worth of the soul must be acknowledged, since, from this acknowledgment alone, both must spring.

## SUNDAY III.

## CHAP. III.

## On Carefulness to save the Soul.

THE supreme wisdom of labouring in the first place to save the soul will best appear from comparing this object with those of chief value amongst men. These are beauty, honour, knowledge, and wealth. The lovely form, which so easily captivates the heart of man, and fills the mind which owns it with self-exalting thoughts, little deserves the idolatrous regard it receives. No power on earth can insure it from the waste of time, from the blast of disease, or the untimely stroke of death. The place of honour, or the enchantments of popular applause, are of little worth, because subject to all the caprice of fickle-minded men. How many, once the favourites of their king, the idols of a nation, have lived to see their envied honours wither round them, and their name sink into oblivion, if not contempt! Ambition for literary fame, and acquisition of knowledge, is no less liable to utter disappointment. In one fatal hour a fever or paralytic stroke may disorder your brain, or wipe away from your memory the very traces of all the treasure so carefully committed to its keeping. Thus may you be left a sad survivor of yourself; a mortifying spectacle to human pride; a melancholy irresistible proof how easily men may rate the attainment even of knowledge in arts and sciences higher than it deserves.

If your great aim in life be to command all external advantages, which can minister to vanity or plea-

sure, your pursuit is not only low and despicable, but your enjoyment precarious to the last degree. Life itself, the foundation of your joys, is but a vapour that soon vanishes away. Every day we see some opulent sons of industry rooted out of their dwellings, and commanded away into another world, where not a mite of all their gain can follow them.

But suppose your affections more laudably engrossed by love of your offspring, whom to neglect would be worse than brutish—yet here you may much exceed all reasonable bounds, and only prepare for yourself insufferable anguish. You are utterly impotent to preserve from fierce disease, or violent death, the beloved image of your own person. When out of your sight, or at a distance, you may, like Sisera's fond mother, chide its delay, and be asking, (prompted by impatient Love), why is my son, or daughter, so long in coming? when the all-wise God has been pleased to take away the desire of your eyes with a stroke.

Thus it appears from a just survey of every object to which men can give themselves up, how vain it is, when weighed in the balance with a supreme concern for the salvation of the soul. Whatever you can pursue, this excepted, a very degrading circumstance necessarily attends it; it can be no better than an annuity for life, the value of which each succeeding year greatly diminishes, and at the hour of death, the whole must end for ever.

On the contrary, if you are only solicitous to save your soul, the unexpected disasters, inevitable disappointments, and sudden death, which scourge and harass the children of this world, will be affecting proofs of the wisdom and unrivalled excellency of your choice. The shame, grief, and rage, so frequent amongst disappointed men, will proclaim you blessed, who, feeling the worth of your soul, seek its eternal

welfare, by a constant intercourse with its Creator, Redeemer, and sanctifier. Then you may set at defiance the army of evils, so terrible to all who have their portion here. That army may call forth and try your faith and patience, but hurt your soul it cannot. In every possible circumstance, the wise choice you have made, will at once cover you as armour, and fill you with a hope full of immortality. Are you poor, and despised for being so? You have examples and prospects before you, more than sufficient to bear up your spirits. You see your own case in the infallible history of the saints of God, who were destitute and afflicted, and in that wonderful contrast of meanness and grandeur, extreme poverty and immense wealth of soul, the dying Lazarus. With gladness of heart you will confess the deepest distress, and the surest title to glory may for a small moment unite in the same person. In every case where supreme attention to the soul's good has taken place, and been manifest in faith and love, poverty, however extreme, afflictions, however long continued, must add both to the weight and brightness of your eternal crown.

In sickness, also, the supreme wisdom of caring above all things for the soul shines out with great brightness. For though health be essential to sensitive happiness, and pining disease leaves no enjoyments to the proud and unbelieving, yet, in this case, all who have sought after the salvation of their soul in God's own appointed way, find sources of consolation sufficient to preserve them from wild impatience, or miserable dejection of mind. Inspired with lively edifying meekness of spirit, they receive the chastisement of their heavenly Father, effectually to purge away still more of the dross which cleaves to their souls. Their spiritual welfare (more prized than health, strength, or natural life)

reconciles them to correction, so supremely useful to it. The whole man miserably suffers in time of sickness and pain, when the soul has been despised; when valued, and instructed in divine truth, the inferior part alone feels the pressure.

To advance a step farther: Death, the detector of all cheats, and touchstone of true worth, will confirm the excellency of your conduct, in caring above all things for your soul. On the bed of death, the gay, the prosperous, and the noble, who have lived in pleasure upon earth, hang down their heads. Distressing indeed is their situation; so unprepared for their change; the loss all their delights is come upon them; their dissolution can *promise* them nothing, if it forebode not evil insupportable. To Christians who have felt the worth of their souls, every thing about them wears another aspect. Must they leave this world? It has been already long ago renounced. Must they part with all temporal benefits for ever? How placid the surrender, when the riches of eternity are theirs! No repining, no striving to get a reprieve from the sentence of death, which has been habitually expected to translate their souls to everlasting rest.

In fact, abundant proofs have been given in their last hours (when mortal disease left reason unimpaired) by all who have been duly careful to save their souls, of their excellent choice. Those strong lines of Dr. Young's justly describe the happy few, whose souls have been more precious to them than every earthly object.

*The chamber where the christian meets his fate,  
Is privileg'd beyond the common walk  
Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heav'n:  
God waits not the last moment; no, he owns his friends  
On this side death, and points them out to men,  
A lecture silent, but of sovereign power.*

These several great advantages, arising from supreme care for the soul, are still more valuable, because in no instance uncertain. You may brave the thickest dangers of war, and deserve its richest rewards, yet fall an early victim in the bloody fight, or after it have your services forgotten. You may burn with unextinguishable ardour to stand high in the rank of scholars, and ruin your health by excessive study, yet die mortified at the littleness of your reputation. Your labour to succeed in trade may be incessant, yet through a thousand circumstances, out of your power, disappointment may meet you at every turn, and poverty be your lot. The favour of patrons, friends, and relations, may be assiduously courted, and appear promising as you could wish; yet you may be basely supplanted, and others receiving the benefits you were in idea grasping; the very name of patrons, friends, and relations, may be bitter to your remembrance. The world every day exhibits instances of disappointment in each of the cases above described. But if you have sought the salvation of your soul, through faith in Christ, which works by love, you stand exalted above every change incident to the things of time. You have to do with God only as your chief good, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. You may be rich, therefore, or poor, high or low in your station, beloved or slighted by friends, patrons, or relations; you may enjoy health, or be oppressed with mortal disease; whilst in each state, should you ask what method you could have best taken for your own peace, comfort, and felicity? Reason, conscience, experience, and scripture, will unanimously reply to your question, the very method you have, that of caring for your soul above all things. Like a prudent factor, in a distant land, who, instead of lavishing his gain in voluptuousness, yearly

remit it home, that, after all dangers and toils, he may enjoy his native country with ease and honour; so you will be daily growing rich and more rich. Sure, through death, to enter into that pure and blessed world, where, amidst congratulating saints and angels, you shall take possession of an inheritance prepared for your soul, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for you.

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### THANKSGIVING & PRAYER,

Suited to the preceding subject.

WE thank thee, O Father of the spirits of all flesh, for breathing into man a soul capable of receiving the knowledge of thy wondrous works and infinite perfections, and dwelling in the delightful view of them for ever. Deliver us, we humbly beseech thee, from that wilful ignorance, and stupid contempt of our souls, natural to all, and generally prevailing in every place. Rescue us, with a mighty arm, from the enslaving power of this present evil world; from the enchantment of sinful pleasure and earthly comforts, and anxious care for the body: lest these things make us inattentive to the welfare of our immortal souls. By thy power and grace preserve us from the infection of unreasonable and wicked men, who have not faith; and, from being overcome with fear of their reproaches, to join in their profane neglect of salvation. Wherever we are, still sound, O blessed God! in our ears, *What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? and what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Continually dispose us to avoid all such things as will be hurtful, and to follow after those things which will be profitable to our salvation.

Have compassion, O God! on the vast multitude who sell their souls for nought, and are at ease, though on the point of perishing for ever. Cause the scales to fall from their eyes. Take away from them all hardness of heart, contempt of thy word, and cruelty towards themselves, that their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord. We ask it for Christ's sake our only Mediator and Redeemer, in whom we trust.—*Amen.*



## SUNDAY IV.

### CHAP. IV.

#### The Scripture Character of God.

**T**HE first duty of a Christian, which must be inviolably kept, is to think of God, in full agreement of the revelation he hath given of himself; to meditate on this with diligence, humility, and prayer, not daring to indulge fallacious reasonings, lest, forming an imaginary God, he should worship the creature of his own brain.

This absolute submission of the understanding to divine revelation will not be thought in the least dishonourable, if it be considered, that, in our present state of corruption, we are utterly unable to form just conceptions of God, when, leaving the guidance of scripture, we put ourselves in the condition of unenlightened heathens. Their errors on this most important subject, as universal as they were lamentable, de-

cisively prove the weakness of human understanding, and the gross ignorance in man, of God his maker. I shall, therefore, lay before you what the scripture teaches on this fundamental article of belief; and, in absolute submission to it, delineate the character of the blessed God, as he himself hath drawn it; that, knowing the divine nature, we may pay unto him the honour due unto his name; and understanding his adorable excellency, may cry out, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints! who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?"

The scripture teaches us the eternal existence of God. All other beings once were not; and the same power which gave them life could reduce them to their original nothing. He, on the contrary, from all eternity, in essence, felicity, and perfection, has been what he now is, and will remain eternally. The things which are seen compel us to acknowledge this incomprehensible truth. And agreeing with this proof is his own declaration: "I am that I am: the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity."

Nearly allied to the eternal existence, is the immutability of God. His purposes and decrees, his love and hatred, remain the same towards their respective objects. "I am the Lord, I change not. In him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." God is called a rock, to teach us, that as this continues immoveable, whilst the surrounding ocean is in perpetual fluctuation, so, whilst the whole creation is changeable, capable of new additions with respect to their knowledge, power, or degrees of felicity, God alone is absolutely the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

God is a spirit, i. e. possesses, in the highest possible degree, understanding, will, consciousness, and activity. In these properties every spirit stands ex-

alted above matter, and is distinguished from it. But though this difference be sufficient to help our weak conceptions to separate between matter and spirit, as objects of a totally different nature; yet scripture teaches us, that God surpasses in excellence all created spirits, infinitely more than they do the material creation. For we are to conceive of him, not only as a living, intelligent, active being, essentially distinct from all the bodies our eyes behold, but as possessing perfections which belong to no spirit he has formed, and infinitely distant from every imperfection adhering to them; such as, their existence within certain limits, their ignorance in numberless instances, and their defects in excellency; whilst the Father of the spirits of all flesh is omnipresent, infinite in knowledge, wisdom, power, and every perfection. The universe, which entirely owes its existence to his creating power, is not only governed, but incessantly sustained by him; and the whole immeasurable frame pervaded by his all enlivening influence. *Do not I fill heaven and earth! saith the Lord.* This divine perfection is described with equal sublimity and force in the scripture, Ps. cxxxix. *Whither shall I go from the spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven (the regions above the firmament) thou art there; I should find myself not only within the limits of thy sovereign dominion, but under thy immediate inspection. If I make my bed in hell, plunging into the unknown mansions of the dead, and the invisible world, where even imagination loses itself, behold! thou art there.* If, with the swiftness of the sun's rising ray, I could convey myself to the uttermost part of the western world, *even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me.* In thee I shall exist, thy presence shall surround me; thy enlivening power shall support

my frame. *If I say surely the darkness shall cover me. even the night shall be light about me; yea. the darkness hideth not from thee. but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and light are both alike to thee.*

The scripture having thus forcibly described the presence of God, with all things actually existing, exalts his glory still higher, by teaching us that his immensity reaches beyond the bounds of the creation. We are commanded to say, with holy admiration, to the God of our lives, *Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee!* 1 Kings viii.

The omnipresent God is almighty. Every created agent can only fashion his work from materials already prepared, which he cannot make. The glorious God commands things into being. He is not beholden to matter for its existence, as of service to him in the formation of the world; for had this been self-existent, it must have been immutable too. On the contrary, all things, whether material or spiritual, stood up before the mighty God at his call, and were created at his pleasure. *The heavens and all the host of them, the earth, and all things which are therein. are the work of his hands; by the word of the Lord were the heavens made. and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. I the Lord have made the earth, and created men upon it. I have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.*

The same almighty power of God, to which the whole creation owes its birth, is manifested by the disposition and preservation of the world in order and harmony. *He watereth the earth, and blesseth the increase of it. He covereth the heavens with clouds. and prepareth ruin for the earth. He giveth snow like wool. and scattereth the hoar frost like ashes. He divideth the sea with his power, and lay-*

*eth up the depths in storehouses: fire and hail, storm and tempest. fulfil his word.*

The steady course of nature, which profane men consider as the effect of necessity, is the unerring agency of his almighty power. It is he alone *who makes the day-spring know its place, and stretches out the shadow of the evening. He commands the sun to shine by day, and the moon by night; he prepares a place for the rain, and a way for the lightning and thunder. He makes the herbs to grow upon the earth. The hand of the Lord doth all these things.*

The scripture teaches us to conceive what is the infinite power of God, by declaring that in a moment he can dissolve the whole frame of nature. Human force must labour hard to demolish what cost it severe toil to erect; but with greater ease than we can utter a word, the Most High changes the face of the creation, and destroys what seemed to be of endless duration. *He removes the mountains, and they know it not; he overturneth them in his anger. He commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars. He shaketh the earth out of its place, and the pillars thereof tremble. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence.*

But in the attribute of irresistible power, considered by itself, there is no loveliness. To contemplate it with pleasure as the object of adoration and trust, we must behold it in union with other perfections. In such union it subsists in God: for his knowledge and wisdom are equal to his power. More clearly does he comprehend his own eternity, than we our temporary existence; more perfectly his own immensity, than we our limited condition of being; more certainly his own extent of wisdom and

power, than we the thoughts which pass through our minds. His understanding, therefore, is properly said to be infinite.

But if he knows himself, he must know also the work of his own hands; for the meanest artificer, though imperfectly acquainted with the nature of the materials he works on, knows every effect depending on his own voluntary operation. Since, therefore, from the greatest to the least, in heaven or earth, the hand of God has formed, and his providence preserves them all, the whole must be thoroughly known to him, and, wherever his power works, his understanding must discern. The vast fabric, therefore, of the universe, all its laws and furniture, with every event from first to last, are known unto him. The countless hosts of sinless angels, and the world of apostate ones; the long progeny of mankind, with all the designs, desires, and thoughts which have been in the mind of each individual, and all the words which have ever fled from their lips, fall under his notice. With infallible comprehension, he knows all the active principles of the spirits he has formed; how they will be moved by the presence of every object which can come before them; how they will act upon every temptation that can try them, and in every circumstance in which they can be placed. These ideas of the blessed God, his own oracles command us to conceive. "The ways of man are before the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings. The eyes of the Lord are in every place. He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven. The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all imaginations of the thoughts. He knoweth the things that come into our mind, every one of them. All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Joined with this absolute perfection of knowledge in God, is wisdom, or the best exercise and improvement of knowledge. In wisdom he superintends and adjusts all parts of the universe; so that, whatever changes any of them undergo, their usefulness and connexion with each other are uniformly preserved. He accomplishes his purposes, through means to human apprehension most unlikely. He founds the highest manifestation of his glory on what depraved men despise and deride, and in the glaring weakness of his agents, displays the excellency of his own power. He entangles the rulers of darkness in their own net; and by their own stratagems ruins all their laboured designs. The greatest cruelty of Satan and his instruments, he makes subservient to a scheme of eternal mercy, and over-*rules* the apostacy of Adam to display his manifold wisdom to men and angels. "For he has established the world in wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion. He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that they cannot perform their enterprizes. His counsels stand for ever, and the thoughts of his heart from generation to generation."

The several perfections of God, which have been placed before you, are called, by way of distinction, his natural perfections. The more we consider them, the higher must our admiration and our astonishment rise. For who can meditate on eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, almighty power, and infinite wisdom, without feeling they are subjects too big for any created understanding to take in? But his moral perfections we can comprehend with great clearness. And it is as possessing these in union with his natural, that God claims all possible rever-

ence, fear, love, trust, and obedience. On these perfections we shall treat in the next chapter.



## SUNDAY V.

### CHAP. V.

#### The Scripture Character of God.

**T**HE first of God's moral perfections, which we shall consider, is his goodness. By this we mean the exercise of his almighty power in freely communicating excellency and happiness to his creatures, as seemeth right to his own infinite understanding. "The Lord is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He openeth his hand, and satisfieth every living thing. He is the father of mercies, and the God of all consolation: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

So strong in its propensity is his goodness, and so wide in its extent, as to bless even rebels against his government, and enemies to his truth. "He causeth his sun to shine, and his rain to fall on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust. He endures, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction." He encourages, he commands them to return to him. "Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Come now, and let us rea-

son together : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Lest these asseverations should not entirely remove every suspicion of God's willingness to pardon the most enormous offenders, upon their application to him ; because he could swear by no greater, he swears by himself, " As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth ; wherefore, turn, and live ye." And that all who should ever hear his word might believe his glorious goodness thus large, he passed before Moses, and proclaimed, " The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin."

But to prevent such divine goodness from being totally misconstrued into a presumption, that were pardon is so freely offered to the worst of men, on their return to God, there cannot be in his nature an everlasting abhorrence of evil ; to prevent this fatal error, the scripture is full and peremptory in representing the " holiness" of God, that essential disposition of his all-perfect mind, which is infinitely opposite to all evil. For as his power excludes every idea of weakness in him, and his wisdom and knowledge, the possibility of mistake or ignorance, so, his holiness is opposed to all moral imperfection or sin, and is to be considered not as a single attribute only, but as the harmony of them all " the beauty of the Lord ;" since nothing could be mentioned to the honour of God without holiness, separate from this, all other excellencies of the divine nature would be inglorious. His wisdom would deserve no better name than that of subtlety, nor his power than that of dreadful. Wherefore, those exalted spirits, who know best the glories of the divine nature, make heaven resound with their celebration of

this attribute, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts." Such a peculiar regard we find paid to it by the blessed God, that, in confirmation of the promises of the everlasting covenant, he saith, *Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David.* Psalm. lxxxix.

Inseparable from the holiness of God, is the continual notice he takes of the behaviour of each individual respecting himself and his law. On this part of his character, the necessity of our absolute subjection to him depends. For, was God either ignorant of what men do, or judged it insignificant, we should have no more cause to retain an awe of him upon our minds, than if we were athiests; since it is not the existence of God, but his moral government of the world, which calls for our love, esteem, trust, and obedience. To take away, therefore, all ground of suspecting the least want of attention in our Creator, to our deportment and the tempers of our heart, arising from his own glorious majesty and our meanness; to root out this pernicious opinion, which desire of sinning with impunity, leads us all to cherish, the blessed God teaches us that he takes exact cognizance of all we do, speak, think, desire, and design, determined to judge us accordingly. "His eyes behold, and his eye-lids try the children of men. The Lord is a God of knowledge; by his actions are weighed. I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Jer. xvii. 10.

And lest a conclusion should be drawn from the troubles and afflictions of the righteous, that God is not a rewarder of them who diligently seek him; or from the prosperity of the wicked, that he will not punish evil-doers, the scripture entirely removes all foundation for such a thought, by declaring that God

hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and the people by his truth, that so every man may receive the things done in his body, whether they be good or bad.

Not that the end of time, and the day of judgment is the only period when God makes a difference between those who serve him, and those who serve him not. He represents himself, in the strongest terms, as a God continually exercising distinguishing love to his faithful people, whilst he is insupportably terrible to his enemies. Not content with giving to the former express assurances of present protection, and of salvation in the eternal world, he declares, that he maintains with them a constant intercourse of friendship, making such discoveries to them of his nature, truth, and tender love for their souls, as the ungodly will not believe is possible. That in every season of extraordinary temptation, he secretly endues their souls with much strength, and gives them power to come out of the field of battle more than conquerors. A large part of scripture is taken up in representing this matter, from whence we shall select a few passages. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ear is open to their cry. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way; though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand: for the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever. The Lord is a light and defence: He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that lead a godly life. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant. The Lord sitteth above the water-floods, the Lord remaineth a king for ever. The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will give his people the blessing of peace. No weapon that is form-

ed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

The substance of all these inestimable promises, made to believers in all ages, is emphatically confirmed afresh in the New Testament. "If any man loveth me, saith Christ, he will keep my commandments, and I and the Father will love him, and will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The certain enjoyment of such a peculiar manifestation of God's love, St. Paul urges as a sufficient argument to engage men, for the sake of Christ, to renounce the religion of their father's house, and bid defiance to a world of idolaters in arms against them. "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing (what is offered to idols), and I will receive you, and be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Weigh well these passages of holy writ, and you will see, in a strong light, how much the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, regards the conduct of his reasonable creatures, to whom he sends his truth; since, in every instance, without respect of persons, he is not ashamed to call himself the friend, the father, and the exceeding great reward of the faithful in Christ Jesus. He does not think it beneath his infinite majesty to engage his word and oath, that he will never leave them, nor forsake them; but will, after conducting them with safety and honour through this life, call them up into his immediate presence and glory.

On the other hand, we have demonstration, that it is essential to his nature to punish, insupportably, all enemies to his government, and despisers of his

truth, dying in their sins. Hear the revelation of the wrath from heaven against obstinate opposers of his authority ; and doubt, if you can, whether he is concerned to maintain his own cause.

“ The Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh rewards. If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand lay hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make my arrows drunk with blood. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces ; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them. God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword. He hath bent his bow, and made it ready. Upon the ungodly he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a terrible tempest—this shall be their portion to drink. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance will behold the thing that is just. The Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots, like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebukes with flames of fire ; for by fire and his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many. And they shall go forth and look upon the men who have transgressed against me ; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”

To comment on these declarations, would enfeeble them ; and to suppose them figurative, in such a degree as not most emphatically to affirm God's everlasting abhorrence of sin, and his unchangeable purpose to cast into hell all who die in their sins, is to contradict them. The great end for which so many terrible representations of God's indignation are published in his word, is expressed in this sentence : “ Hear ye, and give ear, for the Lord hath spoken, Be-

hold, I will execute judgment; vengeance is mine; I will repay."

Though too many, therefore, fancy the Deity is all mercy, and, for reasons respecting their own case, affect to be shocked at the notion of a God who will not let the wicked pass unpunished, yet He, who cannot deceive, or be destitute of perfect benevolence towards men, (since he was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us); He confirms all the denunciations of wrath now placed before you. He declares that, in the last day, all nations shall be gathered before the throne of his glory; at which most awful hour, in the hearing of the whole rational creation, he will say to all them on the left hand, i. e. to all incorrigible sinners, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Thus his own inspired penmen represent the Almighty as a just God and a Saviour; overflowing in the riches of his grace towards his obedient children, and just to those who despise him, in bringing upon them all the curses written in the book of the law. By this unchangeable disposition towards both, he appears infinitely holy and reverend.

But if the character of God was marked out to us only by his own positive declarations, we should (such is our nature) be very faintly impressed by them. To give his character weight sufficient to regulate our practice, it must be made still more conspicuous, by things already done. Facts, no more to be doubted from the authority which relates them, than if they had been done before our eyes, must ascertain the very same perfections in God, which his word declares he possesses. Accordingly, the scripture account of his manner of dealing, both with angels and men, is a demonstration, level to every capacity, that he is good, merciful, and holy; abounding in love towards his faithful people, but jealous to revenge his quarrel upon all his enemies.

## SUNDAY VI.

## CHAP. VI.

The Perfections of God, exemplified by Facts.

**W**ITH respect to his goodness, it shines forth in all the excellencies and bliss which the angels possess, who never left the state in which they were formed, and in man, as he stood in his original righteousness. The signatures of divine goodness were so strongly impressed upon him, as to excite envy in one who had been an angel himself before the throne of glory. Adam was created full of knowledge, in perfect purity and happiness, invested with dominion over the whole animal creation, in the image of God. He was not only conscious of his power, but maintained uninterrupted communion with him. In this state of perfection Adam was made, possessing it for himself and his whole progeny, till his own wilful and detestable revolt from his Maker lost it all.

Who can believe this account of man's original happiness, recorded in the oracles of God, and not admire his benevolence? Who can survey the riches of Adam's original condition, compared to which, Solomon, in all his glory, was poor, mean, and wretched, and not cry out, Good and gracious is the Lord, who formed his immortal creature, man, in such felicity! Here his goodness is found, in fact, fully equal to every declaration of it in his word.

And when, through envy and malice of the devil, operating upon our first parents, in a manner too mysterious for us to comprehend, Adam revolted from his Maker, requiting all his bounty with the execrable insult of believing Satan a better friend to

his welfare than God; though the hideous act could not but draw innumerable miseries after it, still, in these circumstances, the goodness of God shines brighter than it did, even at the first creation of man; and, where sin abounded, grace does much more abound. For God is pleased to revive our most criminal and desponding parents, with a promise of salvation. Astonishing love! with a promise of sending an invincible Redeemer, in our flesh, who should come, not to be adored, but defamed as confederate with the devil; and crucified as a blasphemer, but on his cross should bruise Satan's head.—“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Did God say of his most idolatrous people, “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together?” What then must be the workings of his love towards his only begotten Son, when he was delivered up for our offences? When God seemed to divest himself of the qualities of a father, and act towards Christ as an incensed Judge? “Herein God commendeth his love, he places it in the highest point of light in which men or angels can behold it, in that, whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Such amazing and irresistible proofs of his goodness, has God been pleased to give to the children of men.

In as palpable a manner he has demonstrated the glorious holiness of his nature. There was once, we read, war in Heaven—Satan and his angels rose up in enmity against their Maker. They were called stars of heaven, from the height and splendour of their state; yet, no sooner did they sin, than they were stripped bare of every honour, covered with everlasting shame, plunged into a bottomless abyss

of woe, and an impassable gulf was fixed between them and their offended Creator. "He spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."

This single fact demonstrates, the Lord our God is holy. For should a king, famed through the world for wisdom and mercy, command nobles nearest his throne to be loaded with fetters, and cast into dungeons, refusing to look on them again with favour, or hear one word in mitigation of their doom; who would not conclude their offence was an insufferable provocation? We must draw the same conclusion, when we read, that the only wise God, who delighteth in mercy, has yet, in the greatness of his displeasure, cast down from their thrones, where his own hand had placed them, so many shining angels, and made them examples, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

This proof we cannot deny, without renouncing the Christian faith. And the next I shall produce, we cannot doubt, without denying the evidence of our senses, because we all feel the execution of a sentence denounced nearly six thousand years ago, upon the human race, for one offence. The threatening was, that Adam should immediately suffer spiritual death, by losing the image of God, in which he was made; that after a life spent in toil and sorrow, his body should return to the dust from whence it was taken, and, with natural, eternal death, we know was connected, by the subsequent declaration of scripture, unless a Redeemer had been given. This, we have no doubt, he escaped, whilst the sentence, in the two former parts of it, is to this hour executed on us all. For what have we in the place of Adam's original power, but weakness? What, for his divine light and knowledge, but ignorance? What

in the room of his peace and communion with God, but natural dislike to him, and distressing fears about his intentions concerning us? What, instead of Adam's original purity, but a heart so deceitful, and so desperately wicked, that God alone can know it? And in the place of an Eden, contrived by infinite power and wisdom for happiness, what but a world of confusion and sin, a vale of misery, a field of battle?

If you ask, whence comes this total reverse of circumstances, between the first man in innocence, and his posterity? He who in justice ordained it, gives us this awful account. By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation—By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners. Ponder this in your heart, and you will not be able to refrain from crying out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts."

Further, the dreadful execution of his wrath, known in all the world, puts out of dispute the holiness of God. Before the death even of all their children, who saw Adam an exile from Paradise, the fountains of the great deep are broken up, and the windows of heaven opened to destroy the whole human race then on earth, except eight persons. And, lest this destruction should not be acknowledged as the act of the righteous Judge of all, in punishing sin, hear the God of mercy, the Father of the spirits of all flesh, addressing Noah: "And behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life from under heaven, and every thing that is in the earth shall die."

There is still one fact more, so striking a demonstration of holiness in God, as to eclipse the destruction of the world by the flood; the fall of Adam, and the ruin of apostate angels. For in

each of these cases, the sufferers were first actual rebels against God. But if you look to the cross of Christ, there you will see the beloved of the Father, higher than the angels, set forth to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, that he might be just (appear so in the eyes of men and angels) and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, Rom. iii. 26.

We have often appealed to the death of Christ, and shall hereafter, yet, we hope, without the charge of needless repetition: because this marvellous fact, considered in different views, affords the strongest proof of different perfections in God. At present it is urged in demonstration of his infinite hatred of sin. In this light, it may be well illustrated by a remarkable passage in sacred history. We read that the Moabites, 2 Kings, ch. iii, fled before the kings of Israel and Judah, and, after a great slaughter, were forced to retire with their king into their city. Here finding himself reduced to the last extremity by his besiegers, he made use of an astonishing method to shew his great indignation against Israel. For he took his eldest son, the heir of his kingdom, and, in the sight of his enemies, offered him up a burnt-offering upon the wall. He obtained his purpose; the kings of Israel and Judah, amazed at the fury which urged him to such a deed, returned instantly to their own country.

This most memorable example, taken in one point of view, applies perfectly well to the subject we are upon. For the eternal Father, after using promises and threatenings, after bestowing mercies and executing judgments, still seeing our sins reach up to Heaven, as if they meant to besiege his throne, expresses infinite indignation against our rebellion: he takes his only begotten Son, the heir of all things,

and, in the sight of heaven and earth, cries out, "Awake, O sword! and smite my shepherd, the man that is my fellow (my equal) saith the Lord of hosts." That, from this fact, we might always remember the divine indignation kindled by our offences, and be assured that our God will be a consuming fire to sinners, who plead not this oblation of Christ on the cross, to obtain pardon and victory over sin.

We produced, in the last chapter, many declarations of the distinguishing love exercised by the Almighty towards each individual who walks before him humbly. The history of providence attests this. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, because unconquerably attached to the truth and authority of his Maker, amidst the abounding impieties of his kindred, is taken from them in a way, which at once immortalizes his own name, and proclaims the love which God bears to all his saints. Before this illustrious fact could be forgotten, Noah, like the ark, which preserved him and his family, is lifted up to the notice of the whole world, as an everlasting memorial, that, in the most desolating judgments, the care of each individual saint is with the Most High. In the case of righteous Lot, the same peculiar love is again manifested; and two assertions are made upon this occasion, expressing the tenderest regard to his faithful servants. Sodom itself, it is said, should have been spared for the sake of ten righteous persons, had only so small a number been found within its walls. We are also assured, that, till Lot was escaped and safe, vengeance could not be poured out on that detested city. In the same animating and comfortable view, we are to ponder on the history of Joseph; the peculiar favour Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, found with the Lord, and they only of all Israel,

who came out of Egypt. To the same purpose we are to consider David's astonishing preservation, in spite of all the bloody-minded Saul could do; Elijah's miraculous ascension into Heaven; the three Hebrew youths walking in the midst of a fiery furnace; and Daniel's inviolable safety in the den with ravenous hunger-bitten lions. All these are witnesses chosen of God, and established by miracles wrought in their favour, as precedents to assure every dear obedient child of God, who in a measure copies the pattern they set before him, that his self, no less than they were, is the objects of God's special care and love. And though we see not now the course of nature over-ruled for the deliverance of the faithful, still the comprehensive promise of the unchangeable Jehovah abideth sure; "He knoweth them that are his, and will make all things work together for good to them that love him," and are called according to his purpose.

We read also in scripture a demonstration, in facts, of God's holiness. Many awful instances of immediate vengeance, executed on presumptuous offenders, are recorded in his oracles. Scarcely can you name one sin, which has not been singled out as the object of his hot displeasure. Ham mocking his excellent father, betrayed for once into excessive drinking, is cursed; Onan, for self-pollution, slain on the spot; Lot's wife, full of worldly cares, and lusting after wealth, is turned into a pillar of salt, where she turned back in her heart to Sodom. Envy and aspiring pride are punished with horrible destruction in Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. In Achan's fate, and Gehazi's leprosy, we see how God abhorreth the covetous. Behold, thou vile advocate for fornication, the javelin of Phineas thrust through Zimri and Coshi his paramour; an act of justice so grateful to God, as to be rewarded with highest honour in the

family of Phineas for many generations. Give up thy favourite conceit, that whoremongers God will not judge; for, behold, three and twenty thousand are cut off by him, for this sin, in one day. Stand astonished at the divine patience towards thee, thou lying tongue, when thou readest how Ananias and Sapphira perished with the breath of falsehood on their lips! Ponder well thy fellow criminals' doom, thou despiser of Jesus, and see what infernal malice actuates thy heart, which seeks to pervert the right ways of the truth, when Elymas, the sorcerer, is set before thee as an enemy to all goodness, a child of the Devil, and smitten with blindness, by the act of God, for his infidelity. Understand, from the ignominious death of Herod, that self-exaltation is an abomination to the Lord; for, behold, the royal deified orator, after receiving, as his due, the shout of blasphemous applause, is immediately stricken by the angel of the Lord, "because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."

All these instances, and many more recited in holy writ, undeniably prove, that wherever envy or malice, covetousness or pride, profaneness, impurity, or any temper contrary to God's law prevails, there the wrath of God abideth, and must abide, till it be done away.

Such, in his natural and moral perfections, in his government and providence towards his whole rational creation, is the true God. And that there is only one God, in all, and through all, and over all, the scripture most plainly affirms. "I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me. Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God." Yet the same scripture, with equal plainness of expression, teaches us, that in this uni-

ty, the Son and Spirit are comprehended, in glory equal, in majesty co-eternal, with the Father. Without controversy, great is this mystery of godliness; yet it must be received, because divine perfections, which cannot consist with the condition of creatures, being the essential glory of God above them all, we are assured, the Son and the Spirit possess. Eternity, omnipresence, infinite knowledge, and almighty power belong to them; therefore, together with the Father, are they to be worshipped and glorified. God the Father, Son, and Spirit, is the God of the Christian church. Jews and Turks openly revile this mystery as execrable blasphemy; and baptized apostates, not able to brook implicit submission to the oracles of God, heartily join with them. But the church universal (i. e. all the assemblies of Christ's people) unanimously acquiescing in the word of God, and perfectly satisfied with its naked declaration, dedicate their children in baptism to the ever-blessed Trinity, and continually conclude their public worship with prayer to partake of the distinct blessings each of these sacred three impart, entreating that the love of God the Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, may be with us all.

Examine, therefore, and prove yourself, whether your idea of God be faithfully copied from the scripture? Whether you do not remain in gross and fatal ignorance of his real character, notwithstanding the complete manner in which he has revealed himself in his own word? Take it by no means for granted, that you are in reality what you profess, a Christian; knowing God. For thousands thus flatter themselves, whilst their ideas of him are detestable in his sight. Search, therefore, the matter to the bottom, and see whether you heartily acknowledge God is what he declares himself to be, in those

instances, where pride and love of sin are most apt to prejudice our minds against the real character of our Maker.

For instance, do you know, he bears that perfect abhorrence to all iniquity, which the Bible always affirms he does? Are you established in the truth, that God is in no degree cruel to the work of his hands, though he doom every soul dying in sin to feel for ever the weight of his indignation? Do you confess from the heart, that the sanctions of his government are full of glory, though this be the consequence, that, to every hypocrite and rebel, our God is a consuming fire.

Again, examine whether you are firmly persuaded that the God whom you worship is a sun and a shield to every one who believeth in Jesus? Whether you are sure that the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, does humble himself to watch incessantly over his faithful people for good, as a wise and tender father doth over the son that serveth him? Whether you believe that God doth indeed dwell with men, giving to every individual who lives according to his will, light and life, peace and consolation, strength and power, which none beside on earth possess? Finally try yourself, whether you have affecting views of the excellency of God, manifested in the person and office of the Redeemer, and in the influences of the spirit, by which he holds communion with the church of Christ.

From such enquiries, your knowledge or ignorance of the God described in the Bible will be made evident: because it is in these important points our Maker has revealed himself and his conduct, which the world by wisdom never could have discovered. And just in the same proportion as God's own representation of his self, and his designs is received

with steadfast faith, are you really enriched with divine knowledge. A knowledge of inestimable value, because alone able to heal man's corrupted mind, to keep it firm to duty in the midst of trials; a knowledge pronounced by Christ to be eternal life.

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## A PRAYER,

For the Knowledge of God.

COMMAND, O blessed God, we humbly beseech thee, the light of the knowledge of thy glory to shine into our hearts. Teach us to conceive of thy infinite majesty aright. May we know that thou hast made all things for thyself; that thou upholdest all things, giving life, health, strength and doing whatever thou pleasest in the armies of Heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth. Teach us to understand, that from the beginning, all thy works in all places of thy dominion, are known unto thee; that our most secret purposes, desires, and thoughts are more open to thy all-seeing eye, than to the notice even of our own minds. Conscious of our ignorance and inability to conceive, what is fit for thee to teach, command, or do, give us to bow with lowest reverence before every revelation of thy will, and every appointment of thy providence.

O Lord! open our eyes, that we may see all thy goodness, in the blessings of health and strength, of food, raiment, and fruitful seasons, which descend upon the just and the unjust. Above all, grant us, we beseech thee, the light of faith to comprehend, with all saints, the height and depth, the breadth and length of thy love in Christ Jesus. And lest our wicked hearts should abuse the riches of thy grace,

fill us with conceptions of thy glorious holiness ; that thou art not to be approached but through the mediation of thy Son, nor wilt vouchsafe remission of sins but through his blood.

Enlighten the eyes of our understanding, to perceive how good and gracious thou art to all who love thy name, ever caring for them ; watering them every moment, and keeping them by night and day, lest any hurt them. We earnestly beg this knowledge of thy nature, and thy rich mercies, that we may glorify thee as God, put our trust in thee without wavering, serve thee diligently with great delight, and never wilfully offend thee.

We ask these blessings in entire dependence upon our faithful and merciful high-priest, Jesus Christ, who come into the world to manifest thy name. To him, with thyself, and the eternal Spirit, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.



## SUNDAY VII.

### CHAP. VII.

The natural Condition of Man respecting God.

**WE** can make no progress in any science, till we understand its first principles. In religion it is the same, that science, in which all are deeply interested. Here the ground-work must be laid in knowledge of our own character, as it regards the great of duty, and the great object of religion.

With respect to God, then, experience and scripture test, that man is deplorably blind, depraved,

and consequently guilty. The blindness of man proves itself by his fancying the excellencies of body, mind, or estate which he possesses, his own. Hence, though in words he acknowledges an intelligent Creator, he perceives not the consequence necessarily flowing from this truth, to the great glory of his name, that of him and through him are all things. Hence the beautiful are intoxicated with admiration of their own pleasing form; the rich despise the poor; men distinguished by acquired knowledge, or superior genius, look down with haughty airs on the ignorant vulgar; and even the spiritual man is too apt to exalt himself, viewing the gifts he has received.

The abundant prevalence of these disorders loudly proclaims the blindness of man's mind to that fundamental truth, that no one can receive "any thing, except it be given him from above:" and that with respect to every advantage which we value, God maketh men to differ. It is a continual labour, even with the aid of supernatural light, to get deliverance from the power of this blindness. And some symptoms of it may be found (where you would least suspect) in the excellent of the earth.

Man's natural blindness with respect to God is evident also from the judgment he makes on the life of faith, and that of self-indulgence. Compare them together, you would not think it possible to make a wrong choice. For what is a life of uniform obedience to God, through faith in Christ? It is allegiance to the wisest of kings, and a due testimony of filial duty to the best of fathers; it is freedom to the fettered soul, and victory over affections, base as they are hurtful. It is a peaceful state of mind which affords ground for accusations of having done injury to a creature. It makes man a blessing to all in connexion with him, effectually restraining even from

the intention of doing wrong. In prosperity it keeps the mind humble; in adversity calm and patient; nor can the stroke of death dismay, for its hope is full of immortality.

Compare, with this life of faith, a life of self-indulgence. How depraved, how hideous! It is a monstrous compound of ignorance, contradicting infinite wisdom; of contempt in a vile worm for infinite majesty; of ingratitude for rich bounty; of rebellion aiming its blow against the bowels of sovereign mercy. A life of self-indulgence makes a man afraid to look into himself infectious and full of mischief to others, and dismayed at the thought of a judgment to come. In every view, it is without excuse, and altogether odious.

Can there be any light then remaining in the mind of man, if a life of faith is not always without hesitation infinitely preferred to a life of self-indulgence? For beauty in its highest bloom does not, in the eye of flesh, so evidently excel pale loathsome disease, as a life of faithful obedience surpasses, in reason's eye, one of self-gratification.

Yet, to the shame of the human race, fact and experience daily prove, the choice is obstinately fixed on what deserves contempt, and preference given where detestation is due. Innumerable are the slanders with which blind man asperses a life of uniform obedience to God; and loud his complaints against it. He industriously employs all his wit to make religion appear irksome; and opposition to it guiltless.

In vain do all the children of obedience lift up their voice together, and cry, "Great is the peace which they have, who keep thy law, and nothing shall offend them." In vain does Jehovah promise his presence, and his spirit; his pardon, power, peace, and salvation to the faithful and obedient. Men

naturally perceive no value in these things, worthy to be weighed against the pleasures they find in self-will and transgression.

Further, did not experience fully prove, that perpetual disgust and disappointment harass us, whilst we are intent to indulge ourselves, it might be no decisive proof of man's blindness, to seek for happiness in what the world can give or promise, to the neglect of God. Or were we, like the Heathens, incapable of knowing what notice he would humble himself to take of us his poor creatures, on either of these suppositions, it would be no evidence of blindness in man, to reject as imaginary, the prospect of finding happiness in the knowledge of God, and lively consciousness of his favour. For we might then say, it was the height of arrogance to imagine there could be intimate friendship between him and man.

On the contrary, when the infallible word of God reveals his adorable excellency, and assures us at the same time of the high place man holds in his thoughts, and that his heart is open to embrace him, so soon as he desires deliverance from sin, and to treat him with all the endearments a son can receive from the most kind father; in such a case, man must be deplorably blind, if he does not listen with delight to these declarations; trust in them with all confidence, and accept them as his chief happiness and glory. Yet, alas! we are with great difficulty brought to believe, that God does indeed dwell with man; and with greater to desire communion with him. After a thousand disappointments from the world, still, with boundless credulity, we depend upon every delusion for our joy. The meanest trifle, the most sordid pursuit, every thing except the knowledge and love of God, we are blind enough to fancy worthy our affection, and our pains to possess it.

In this matter of prime influence on life, gross darkness naturally covers every mind. And whilst buzzing insects and crawling worms unerringly perceive what is most beneficial for them, constantly pursue and constantly adhere to it, man naturally turns aside from the fountain of all good, and dares conclude no profit is to be found in the knowledge and love of him. Even men of the finest abilities and penetration in the things of sense, are in this point miserably blind. Blind are rich and poor, young and old, priest and people, till they receive from above the gift of a right judgment.

Scripture strongly asserts this blindness natural to us all. "Man is born like a wild ass's colt," Job xi. 12, not only destitute of heavenly wisdom, but stupid to apprehend, and averse to receive it. Observe how keenly the comparison is pointed, like the *ass*, an animal remarkable for its stupidity to a proverb; like the *ass's colt*, which must be of course more egregiously stupid than its dam; like the *wild ass's colt*, which is not only blockish, but refractory; neither by nature possessing valuable qualities, nor capable of receiving them through discipline.

The natural blindness of the human mind is also necessarily implied in those many assertions, which ascribe all discernment of the Gospel, to the influence of the Holy Ghost, called the Spirit of Truth, because his office is to lead us into all the truth. Nay, decisive on this point, was there no other testimony, is that remarkable one, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Equal to man's blindness respecting God, is the depravity of his temper. This discovers itself in forgetting his Maker, though the whole creation loudly attests his excellency and presence. Man

can be witness to the whole host of Heaven moving in orderly array around him ; he can enjoy and feast upon the bounties of his God ; stand encircled with his mercies, and be preserved from all dangers by his care ; yet never so much as once advert to the infinitely wise and gracious hand, from which he receives his all. He can shut God out of the government of his own world, because invisible ; and ascribe to the mere ignorant undesigning instruments, which subserve the divine will, the honour of the most beneficial effects. So that when God would impress a nation with awe of his absolute dominion over the affairs of men, he sends forth his judgments on the earth, which, like a glaring comet held up in the air, by its alarming appearance, may lead up the thoughts of men to their Maker.

With respect to individuals, there is no recovering any man from that deep forgetfulness of God in which we naturally lie, without changing his joy into heaviness, his prosperity into trouble. A chamber of sickness, or dread of death, the king of terrors, must make him know himself to be but man. Pain must scourge him, or fearful apprehensions of hell awaken the sleeper to own his dependence upon God. Nay, after these severe monitors have faithfully performed their office, and put man in remembrance of his Creator, the remembrance of him passes away (like that of a guest which tarries but a day), though all nature exhibits him to the senses.

“ Though the sun, in transcendent brightness, comes forth from his chamber every morning to proclaim his Maker’s glory ; though the moon and stars, which govern the night, add their united evidence to magnify their Creator to a gazing, but unaffected world ; though the air whisper his clemency in the balmy refreshing gale ; though the roaring winds and rending storms sound forth his majesty, yet all

addresses fail ; man refuseth to hear. Each flower arrayed in beauty, or breathing perfume, courts our affections for its infinitely amiable Author ; not a bird that warbles, or a brook that murmurs, but invites our praise, or chides our ingratitude. All the variety of fruits deposit their attestation on our palates, yet seldom awaken our hearts ; they give us a proof of the divine benignity, as undeniable as it is pleasing, and too often ineffectual. In short, the whole creation is a kind of magnificent embassy from its almighty Lord, deputed to proclaim his excellencies, and demand our homage." Yet man, so strong is the depravity of his mind, disregards the former, consequently must withhold the latter.

It may be said, these instances of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God are silent ; therefore they fail to engage attention. But, alas ! man's forgetfulness of his Maker is stubborn enough to withstand much louder calls. Behold the messengers of the Lord, with heaven-kindled love in their hearts, and fire in their eyes, address him. They plead the cause of God and truth, making their earnest appeal to man's reason and experience. They set the Father of the spirits of all flesh before his mind, in the supreme glory of his character, and the overflowing riches of his grace. Yet the impression made abides no longer than till the first earthly object occurs. The merest trifle can scatter every idea of God from his corrupted memory, as wind scatters the chaff.

Nay, when that incorruptible word, which breathes the majesty of him who inspired it, is read by his ministers, man, till renewed by grace, betrays a flagrant insensibility towards God in his whole deportment. The sons of business are in idea buying, selling, and getting gain in his house, as at the exchange or market ; the eye of lewdness ceases not to gratify itself in the holy assembly. Youthful

curiosity roves from object to object, as prompted by pride of birth, beauty, or apparel. And, amidst a multitude of professed worshippers, only the few happily recovered from natural forgetfulness of their Maker, worship him in spirit and in truth.

Weigh this fact, every where falling under notice, and you must conclude from it, that the God in whose hands is all our life and happiness, we overlook more than the smaller matter relative to our temporal interest; and forget much more than any person on whom we have the least dependence.



## SUNDAY VIII.

### CHAP. VIII.

#### On the Depravity of Man.

**WE** have found it is the practice of the human race, till renewed to live in forgetfulness of God. But must not this be owing to contempt of his excellency and majesty? Are we wont to be obstinately inattentive to our friends, whilst any degree of veneration remains for them? When the lord of a great household is absent from his family, and by consequence invisible to his servants, do they lose the remembrance of his authority, before they become profligate? Or, when children are separated from worthy parents the distance of whole kingdoms, can they forget their relation and obligations till they are become utterly degenerate? If we trace, therefore, man's forgetfulness of God up to its source, we shall be convinced he despises the Lord God om-

nipotent. In every Christian country, the faint remonstrances which reason makes against sin are mightily enforced by scripture ; and the notion that the infinite grandeur of God will not suffer him to pay regard to our conduct, is confuted by the whole history of his providence, and by undeniable facts. No earthly potentate ever can shew himself attentive in such a degree to the manners of his subjects, or jealous of the honour of his laws, as the King eternal has done in the most awful ways. Who among the princes of the earth has ever so fully enacted prohibitions against all evil, or so strictly enjoined the practice of all righteousness, as the Judge eternal? Who has added penalties to deter from presumptuous offences, worthy to be named with everlasting burnings? In what nation are such rich preferments and honours insured to loyalty and obedience, as in the kingdom of our God? or, among earthly monarchs, who has been found so terrible to avenge his quarrel, as He in his righteous judgments, which have been executed upon sinners?

To despise, therefore, this great, and terrible, and excellent God, judging by the universal sense of mankind, is an instance of desperate depravity. For to despise a superior, is a greater offence, none will deny, than if he were our equal ; and an affront to a crowned head will be deemed an insult much beyond the same offence against a private man ; because, as all honour bears a value according to his degree who confers it, so dishonour is measured by his character who receives it. To despise God, is an offence, therefore, without a figure, infinite. For almighty power, in essential union with perfect wisdom, justice, and mercy, make up the name of God, and demand the heart-felt adoration of all his reasonable creatures. Even to doubt whether such adoration be due to him, argues profligate stupidity ; but to

## COMPLETE DUTY OF MAN.

act as if he were unworthy of our fear or love, is flagitious wickedness.

Yet thus to act is the natural temper of mankind. Wherever you turn your eyes, you may see it in a strong light. Consider the vast multitude who live in the open breach of one or other of God's commandments. Are they doing so, because ignorant that their sin is forbidden? It cannot be affirmed. Profane swearers know what the third commandment requires, and the Lawgiver who ordained it. The mighty to drink strong wine, and those who feast and pamper their bodies, know who calls upon them to be temperate, and denounces woes upon all whose god is their belly. The lewd are no strangers to their doom; whoremongers and adulterers God will judge: nor fraudulent tradesmen to that solemn interrogation, Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?

No declarations can be more plain or peremptory, yet iniquity has in all ages and places abounded. Offenders in each of the above named classes, though warned, entreated, importuned, adjured in the name of God, not only refuse to hearken, but cry out, There shall no harm happen unto us. By this conduct, man foams out his shame, proving that when he can neither plead ignorance, or forgetfulness, he will dare to treat the laws of his Maker, as if he thought them, in some instances, the wild dictates of passion, the impositions of a tyrant, or the injunctions of a fool. He will dare to treat his law, as if, in some instances, respecting his own case, it was weak in its intention, envious in its restraints, needless to be observed, and nothing to be dreaded from trampling it under foot.

It is in vain for man to reply, whilst a wilful transgressor, that far be it from him to despise God, he means only to please himself in his sin; for in a

Christian country, where the law of God is in every one's hand, we cannot possibly do the one, without being guilty of the other also. Nor can a proud rebellious spirit more strongly express contempt of God's government, than by concluding it his own interest to walk contrary to it; and when doing so, despise his wrath, revealed in the most solemn manner against all the unrighteousness and ungodliness of man.

But in whatever light man himself may regard the practice of sin, it is beyond dispute God will punish it as inexcusable contempt of his authority; for he represents himself on this very account inexorable to the cries of sinners, when they are appalled at the miseries coming upon them. Because I have called, by my law, ministers, and people, upon the disobedient, and ye refused; and when, as a man vehemently desirous to be regarded, "I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, and I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you," Prov. i. 24, 27. In this alarming passage, observe, the Almighty expresses the strongest contempt and scorn towards obstinate sinners, which is described as a just retaliation upon them of the very same usage, which he, through his forbearance and mercy, so long received at their hands.

What has been offered, clearly proves much depravity in the natural temper of man towards his Maker. There is no way of denying this, unless you affirm it is no baseness to forget the fountain of all good, and treat infinite excellency with contempt. But the impiety of such a shocking assertion can proceed from no heart, which is not itself a living demonstration of the great depravity it cannot bear to own.

## SUNDAY IX.

## CHAP. IX.

## The Human Heart's Enmity against God.

**T**HE deplorable blindness of man in his natural condition; his neglect and contempt of God, manifest in the whole form of his life, have been already proved. But there is still, alas! something worse chargeable upon us all, till created again in Christ Jesus. This I should have carefully concealed, did I write for reputation, or to please my readers, and not to bring them to the knowledge of themselves, one of the richest blessings they can receive. I well know what is going to be proved upon fallen man, is infinitely offensive to pride, and, sooner than any other charge, kindles indignation. I remember the time, when, full of self-complacency, I should have resented such an accusation beyond measure, for the truth of which I now contend. I only entreat the candor of my readers, to believe I would conscientiously avoid adding any thing to the sinfulness of fallen man, which in nature has no existence, and in the Bible no proof. I desire also to be esteemed no less full of love to the human race, than if I maintained that man was born with perfect rectitude of soul. With the greatest pleasure I should embrace that notion, if fact and God's express testimony did not compel us to renounce it as a dangerous self-flattery, and an absolute falsehood.

Having thus endeavoured to procure an unprejudiced hearing of my proofs, I am bold to open to the bottom the detestable corruption of human nature; and maintain that there dwells in the heart of

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every man, till changed by grace, an aversion to the Author of his being. This accusation, those who are notoriously abandoned will not allow, much less will the decent, sober, and honest. The proofs, therefore, I shall bring, are what all confess, do demonstrate hatred in every other case. After these proofs, the infallible decision of God's word upon the matter shall be produced.

It is then universally allowed, that nothing but aversion in the heart towards persons, beyond a doubt, wise and excellent, can render their company irksome. Whenever we observe this, we conclude there must be some personal dislike, however concealed or denied. Now, secret prayer, and reading the scripture with a devout mind, are a near approach to God, so like being in his company, that these means of grace are called seeking his face, and entering into his presence. If, then, strong aversion to holding such intercourse with our Maker, can be proved natural to fallen man, it will prove his aversion, since none can dispute the wisdom or glorious excellency of God.

By this test, try the human race in every stage of life. Do young or old, before they are divinely changed, love prayer and reading the scripture, and take delight in both? I do not affirm they totally neglect them; but do not they repeat prayers hastily, without desiring to know the meaning of what they repeat or read? Are not a few minutes in a day thought time sufficient for such a task? Is not the Bible, that authentic account of God, ourselves, and the wonderful things he hath wrought, a tasteless book, very little read; whilst hours are every day consumed with joy, in despicable amusements, and frothy entertainments? What can more clearly prove man's aversion to God, than this conduct, especially as he, in infinite condescension, offers to

bold communion with us, invites our acquaintance, would have us regard him as our exceeding joy, and lead our lives with him. Why do we not? Because we like not to retain him in our knowledge, nor to glorify him as God.

Further, when the excellency of a person is indisputably great, nothing but aversion towards his self can make strong regard for his honor, the cause of separation between nearest relations and dearest friends. But if the dislike reach even to those who are zealous for his honour, only on that account, in what virulence must it reign against the party who is the cause of the quarrel?

By this rule of judging, man's natural aversion to his Maker is no less flagrant than detestable; for zealous subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ, and love for his name, is nothing more than sincere attachment to the glory and truth of God. Yet, in all stages of life, this temper is insufferably offensive to mankind.

Sometimes, as a prodigy, it appears in a child at school. Instantly his playmates, as from instinctive enmity, will have him in derision. In universities you may consume your time in idleness, be lewd, intemperate, or profane in discourse and principle, and suffer no persecution or reproach. But if, with Christian fortitude, you refrain from all fashionable vice, and dare to urge the law of God as the standard of right and wrong, sneers and abusive insult must be expected. As this is the case, before the corrupt affections of the heart are inflamed by long indulgence, it must necessarily be worse afterwards. Accordingly, faith in Christ working by love, and producing the most excellent fruits, are the cause of variance and separation, where the greatest intimacy and friendship subsisted before. The same persons who were pleased with your good sense and good

manners, who even proposed you as a pattern for imitation, whilst living with them in fashionable forgetfulness of God, so soon as you are divinely changed into a real christian, will look shy upon you, censure sharply your principles, and, if interest prevent not, openly abuse your extravagant piety, and renounce your acquaintance. Could this ever be the case, was there indifference only towards God in the heart, and not aversion? By no means; for though you may not approve of your friend's intimacy with a third person of known worth, yet you would never be enraged with him on that account, unless you greatly disliked that person.

It is a certain proof of aversion to your King, when you cannot bear the respectful mention of his name; when in silent chagrin you hear the relation of his good qualities; and are impatient to leave the room, till another topic of discourse be introduced. What then are we to conclude from the general hatred of religious conversation? Why, in all the vast variety of subjects on which men discourse, is objection only made against those sentiments which exalt the honour of God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? What but inbred aversion would immediately brand conversation of this kind, as odious cant, and obstinately ascribe it to ostentation, or some base design. Men will be pleased with incessant prating about every the meanest trifle, dogs, horses, cards, and courtezans; but as soon as an attempt is made to turn our attention to the Lord of the world, his transactions, commands, government, or love, the very mention of the subject occasions, in almost every company, a visible disgust; disapproving silence instantly ensues; till some mean foolish pursuit of men is again introduced, as a pleasing topic of discourse. Ah! what can demonstrate, that God is the object of general aversion, if this

frils, which proclaims aloud, that he is the only person of whom no one chooses to speak, and whose praises no one desires to hear! Could a circle of avowed atheists desire to have it otherwise?

Again, no one doubts whether enmity reigns in the heart against our earthly sovereign, when the tongue is ever abusing his best friends, and casting reproach upon his government, and the hand active in opposing it. Judging by the same rule, how plain is the enmity of men, unrenewed in their minds, against God! It is common to hear them pour out ridicule on the faithful servants of Christ, as creatures absurdly demure, in judgment pitifully weak, in temper madly enthusiastic; though ever so prudent, discreet, steady, and excellent. What a malicious insinuation is this against the glorious God! It is saying, in effect, that all who have any concern for his honour, are under the power of delusion, and truly despicable in their choice and pursuits.

Add to this, that the disobedience of men to the law of God of itself proves enmity. Every wilful transgression is a controversy with him who forbids it, and a direct opposition to his will. It is expressly called in scripture rebellion against God. For though we cannot bring forth the weapons of our indignation against the invisible, as rebellious subjects do against their mortal king, yet the bidding defiance to his law demonstrates our inclination to do this execrable deed. It is an evident declaration that our spirit is in a state of hostility against Heaven. Every presumptuous offender calls aloud by his practice upon all who behold it: Come on, rise up with me, as an enemy against the Lord. Who is he, that he should reign over us?

From these instances, notorious in all places, and in every condition of life, it is evident the natural temper of mankind towards the author of their being

is enmity itself; for these instances, every man would confess a demonstration of enmity in every other case. What then but the blindest, basest self-love, can lead us to deny it in the present?

But whether we will allow it or not, our Maker has decided the matter. He constantly speaks of the children of men in their natural state, as haters of him, his adversaries, and enemies. Christ, we are assured, died for the ungodly, which, we are told, in a few verses after, includes our most obnoxious condition of being enemies to God.

The carnal mind (which the context explains to be the mind of man in his natural state) is affirmed, Rom. viii. 7, to be not only averse to God, but enmity against him; which enmity expresses itself in abhorring to pay the homage due to the Creator, by believing and obeying his word.

Indeed the gospel itself, by one of its most lovely titles, emphatically proves the melancholy truth, for it is called the ministry of reconciliation. A method contrived by consummate wisdom, and executed by almighty love, to reconcile us unto God, who were enemies to him in our minds, and by wicked works, Col. i. 21.

From this deplorable depravity of man, his sinfulness appears in a glaring light. For what can be more criminal than such a disposition? Consider it in its direct tendency. It is no less than a denial of the relation which subsists between the Creator and creature. It is turning the noblest part of the divine workmanship visible on earth from its proper basis. Was you to break in pieces the whole frame of nature, and resolve the world into a mere chaos, the evil would not be so great, as breaking the primary bond between the Almighty Creator, and his more excellent work, a rational immortal soul. For all the relations which subsist between creatures are mean, in

comparison of the relation between creatures, and the Author of their being. Besides, what monstrous wickedness is disaffection to the glorious Author of our lives? What do we think or say of those who hate their excellent parents? We judge such children guilty in the highest degree, and brand them with every name of reproach. Yet in how small a measure do parents contribute to the being or welfare of their children, compared with what the blessed God doth to ours? And how little superiority have parents in point of power and excellency above their children? Whereas the majesty and excellency of our Maker, none deny, exceed our highest conceptions.

Further, what cause can man alledge as the ground of this disaffection towards God? Many good works has he done for us all; for which of these is he hated? What injuries have we received from him to offend us? With many powerful allurements he draws us, as with the cords of a man; by benefits visible to every eye, and repeated every day, in all the comforts and conveniences of life; by inviting all who will return to their allegiance, to partake of the highest degrees of honour and everlasting salvation, through the sacrifice of his own Son, by whom he beseeches sinners to be reconciled unto him.

Enmity against God comprehends all other wickedness in it. For as love to God and man is the sum of all the precepts, so hatred of God comprehends all iniquity, since every branch of it may be resolved into this detestable depravity of mind.

If you ask, what is the great use of representing the natural vileness of man in his apostasy from God, and describing his character in colours so opposite to those, which have been long in fashion; I answer, the knowledge of man's natural corruption, in the degree proved above, from fact and scripture, is absolutely

necessary to justify the capital doctrines of the Bible : to prove, that, far from being arbitrary declarations, they have their foundation in our misery, of which they are the only cure.

By the capital doctrines of scripture, I understand, redemption from sin, and acceptance with God, through faith in the atonement and righteousness of God our Saviour; the illumination of the mind, and change of all its tempers, by the inward operation of the Holy Ghost.

Against each of these doctrines, you must be strongly prejudiced, or only receive them as speculative points, till you know man's natural condition respecting God, is exceeding sinful. For, though conscience will not suffer you to say, you have done no evil, yet, if you have been decent, sober, and moral, you will quarrel with the doctrine of scripture : confident you are not so wicked by many degrees as that book of truth affirms you are, nor deserve, in any measure, that punishment which, it so solemnly declares, is the wages of sin.

As strong an objection, and in its tendency as ruinous to the soul, will reign in your heart against the way of life. For your own better obedience, after transgressions, will hold a high place in your conceit, and consequently create steadfast hatred to the doctrine of salvation by grace. A doctrine incompatible with a good opinion of our own virtues and performances : for it annuls every plea to obtain mercy, but the blood of the Redeemer, who, in infinite pity, undertook to deliver man from ruin, by bearing on the cross his sin. A way of reconciliation to God, which never can be cordially accepted, nor effectually used, till we confess the human race is altogether corrupt and abominable in their natural tempers respecting their Maker. Whereas the meek acknowledgment of this truth makes it evident be-

yond a doubt, that it became Him, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, in no other way to justify the ungodly, sinners, and enemies to him, and so to bring many sons unto glory.

Further, whilst men are not supposed to be in their natural state, blind to the truths and excellency of God, and in their earliest disposition set against him, the doctrine of illumination by the Holy Ghost, and his agency as the principle of new life, must be rejected as absurd and false. For if man's understanding be not dark, or he can, by his own application and efforts, know the truth and obey it, there can be no need of foreign help. In this case, exhortations to exert his own abilities are rational; but calls upon him to pray for the spirit of revelation are foolish. For the same reason, the agency of divine grace can never be thought necessary to form anew the tempers of the mind, unless it was naturally prone to forget, despise, and hate its glorious Creator: because, to reform the manners in a very considerable degree, or to excel in the practice of justice, honesty, humanity, and mercy, requires no supernatural aid. We daily see some who despise prayer, and the oracles of God, yet live in peace, probity, and good-will towards men; so that we do not universally act contrary to social duties. But it is that strength of impiety which opposes our giving to God honor, and glory, and obedience, and supreme love, which renders the agency of the Holy Ghost indispensably necessary. This detestable depravity running in the blood of mankind, and being interwoven with their frame since the fall, demands his energy, who is the great Restorer of the divine image on the mind of man.

The conclusion, therefore, is plain: in proportion as ignorance of the condition of human nature respecting God prevails, the whole scheme of Chris-

tian principles must be rejected, or received in hypocrisy ; whilst, in the same degree as we know ourselves, we shall reverence, embrace, and improve it, to the glory of God, the good of all about us, and the salvation of our souls.

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## PRAYER,

For the Knowledge of Ourselves,

*Suited to the Preceding Subject.*

O LORD GOD, Thou resisteth the proud, but givest grace to the humble : subdue our haughty spirit which cannot brook the charge of sinfulness brought against us in thy word. Bring to our remembrance the days in which we were like beasts, ignorant of our dependence upon thee ; of thy excellency, or thy authority over us ; or of the detestable baseness of rebelling against thee. How long was it before we said, where is God our maker ? How often, when sickness or pain, danger and deliverance from it, have forced us to think of thy mercies, has the remembrance of thee fled away, as a dream when one awaketh ! Or if, through good education and example, we could not forget thee, how daringly have we despised thy counsel ! We have behaved to thee, as if nothing was so unreasonable as thy commandments, or so contemptible as thy service. Our vile lusts we have served from our hearts, but would have none of thy counsel, nor be checked by thy reproof. Our mind has been enmity against thee, not able to bear thou shouldst be so highly exalted, and we be absolutely restrained from every evil gratification. In aversion to thee, we have chosen the company of the ungodly. We

have taken pleasure in their profane manners. We have held thy most zealous servants in derision, counting their lives foolishness, and their end to be without honor.

Such, O Lord God, have been the effects of our natural enmity towards thee. How exceeding sinful in thy sight! Save us from palliating and dissembling this our condition. In the deepest acknowledgment of thy grace, enable us to cry, Lord, what is man that thou regardest him! From full conviction of our entire depravity, may we feel our need of a Redeemer. May we see our sinfulness, such as could not be pardoned, but through his atoning blood; our vile affections so strong, as not to be subdued but by his spirit; and our souls so fallen from God, as to be incapable of entering into his kingdom, till born again from above.

Grant us wisdom, O God, to trace up all our transgressions to their fountain head, the corruption of our nature. And from every discovery of innate depravity, teach us to set an higher value on the blood and righteousness of Christ, and depend only on the grace of the Holy Spirit. From a clear perception, that in us, *i. e.* in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing, may we be jealous of ourselves, and circumspect, and put our whole trust in God's promises, power, and grace, to keep us from falling.

O Lord, knowing there is none righteous, no not one, that all are corrupt, and wholly so in their nature, give us an heart to pity and pray for all men; to be kind, tender-hearted, and full of bowels of mercy. May we be led, by what we observe in others, to turn our eyes inward, and lament our own manifold defects, since we are all of one blood, and all inherit the same evil nature.

Finally, we commend to thee, O God, who alone canst shew to men in error the light of thy truth,

all who deny their natural blindness and depravity. O hide pride from their eyes. Convince them by thy spirit, and, by setting their evil ways and doings before them, that they ought to abhor themselves, to bow down before thee, wretched, and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked, as they are, begging to be made partakers of the riches of thy grace in Christ Jesus. who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Hear us for his sake, our only Mediator. Amen.



## SUNDAY X.

### CHAP. X.

#### On the Perfection of the Law.

**T**HE law, with its terms of perfect righteousness and life on one hand, of disobedience and death on the other, is the first thing in the word of God which claims our attention. And till this law is known, the gospel cannot be understood; because it is a revelation of the way which God has ordained to deliver sinners from the curse of the law.

This most important connexion between the law and gospel is frequently taught in scripture. Yet, from a strong aversion in us all to confess our shame and guilt, and from a false construction of what is spoken of the law, as if it related to the Jewish state, this point is fatally overlooked by most, who call themselves Christians.

To remove such hurtful ignorance, I shall lay before you the perfection and extent of the law; the excellent benefits which flow from understanding

both its nature and design ; and the pernicious errors which govern the mind, till the law is understood.

The perfection of the law of the Ten Commandments will be evident, from comparing it with all other laws, and considering its extent.

The best laws of human contrivance are sadly defective, because they cannot take cognizance of the intents of the heart, nor condemn the first propensities to evil. Their whole force reaches no farther than the preservation of public peace. On the contrary, the law of God forbids, under pain of penalties insupportable, our compliance with the invisible suggestions of evil concupiscence, and strictly condemns our giving place, but for an instant, to a wicked thought.

If it be said the law of conscience is not defective here, as human statutes must be ; that this, going deeper, serves as a supplement to them, and restrains, where penal laws fail. The answer is obvious ; the law of conscience is formed by their manners and sentiments with whom we are educated, and constantly converse. It must be of course exceedingly depraved by customs and prejudices, and on that account an uncertain and dangerous, instead of a sufficient rule of action. But the law of the Ten Commandments leaves us in no difficulty, nor under any doubts. We know, whilst we are conforming to it, we obey a rule of perfect righteousness.

Further, the laws which are established, even for the peace and welfare of society, are often severe and distressing to some individuals, nor can human sagacity prevent this. The best laws, therefore, are those which are attended with the fewest inconveniences. But the law of God is at all times, and in all places, equally of universal benefit. The most

exact attention to it is sure to produce the greatest measure of comfort and peace among men. No one can say, with truth, he is in the least aggrieved by it: neither rich nor poor, governors nor subjects, whilst they regard their true interest, have cause to wish the least alteration in it.

To proceed one step farther, the law or doctrine, which moral philosophers taught of old, and many still profess to admire above the scripture rule, is little better than deceit varnished over with great swelling words. It talks of eradicating the passions, yet neither promises nor intimates that supernatural aid shall be given to accomplish this arduous work; the man is self-sufficient. Besides, instead of condemning, it encourages the worst tempers in the human breast; for it directs us to conquer intemperance, resentment, and revenge, by *pride*; and the sins of the body by those of the mind, that is, it will make men less like beasts, by making them more resemble devils.

How superior the law of the Ten Commandments! which equally condemns every evil temper, and strikes at the whole body of sin, and at every defilement, which prevents the perfection of holiness.

There is still one law more to be considered, which claims, no less than the Ten Commandments, the God of heaven and of earth for its author, the Jewish ceremonial law. Yet, when weighed with the moral, it will be found of far less excellency; for, though of divine appointment, it was limited to one people; whereas the moral law extends to all, resulting necessarily from the perfections of God, and our relation to each other as his rational offspring. Besides, there was only a temporary and relative use in the ceremonial law; it was in all its branches to serve as a figure for the time then present. It shadowed forth, Messiah, the substance; and

when he appeared, and had finished his work, it was to cease for ever. But the commandments of the two tables, are of unalterable obligation, so long as the world endures; and whilst the Levitical ordinances did mystically respect the inner man of the heart, the law of the Ten Commandments emphatically, and without a figure, ordains what its tempers and desires ought ever to be.

The admirable perfection of the law will appear still more manifest, from briefly pointing out the great extent of duty enjoined by the Ten Commandments. They are designed to secure the honor due to the name of God; sanctify all the powers of man to his service; regulate the life and heart in every situation, and describe the perfection of holiness. For though, in our natural ignorance, seduced too by names of great weight in the learned world, and criminally partial to ourselves, we, with an air of confidence, conclude the commandments mean no more than they are understood by us to mean; yet our God and Judge, by interpreting, himself, three of the ten, plainly proves, *every one of them* reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The First Commandment requires supreme, unrivalled love of God; that sensual pleasure, honor, riches, and every earthly comfort, compared with him, should be vile in our eyes. The Second obliges us to take heed, that we conceive of God as he has revealed his own nature, neither adding nor diminishing any thing; that we worship before him secretly, and in the congregation, according to the rule he hath himself appointed, offering to him spiritual prayers, praises, and thanksgivings, keeping at a distance from every appearance of idolatry. The Third Commandment requires us to be mindful at all times of God's majesty, conscientiously avoiding, in our conversation and thoughts, every

thing savouring of irreverence towards him ; that we observe faithfully the religious profession we make before him, and with the form of godliness join the power. The Fourth obliges us to lay aside every worldly occupation on the Lord's day, that the worth of the soul, and things of a spiritual nature, may take up our thoughts, and more strongly affect our minds. The Fifth requires us, as soon as we can understand our duty, to pay a cheerful obedience to our parents, testifying the sense we have of our debt to them, under God, for life, for much tenderness and care over us in the helpless state of childhood, and numberless benefits beside. The Sixth not only restrains our hands from murderous violence, but condemns every degree of wrath, hatred, or want of love in the heart towards men. The Seventh not only condemns the whoremonger and adulterer, but the looking upon the face of beauty with impure thoughts, as the adultery of the heart. The Eighth is a barrier against every injurious encroachment which self-love would lead us to make upon our neighbour's property or rights: it forbids every species of fraud, however prevalent, or palliated by plausible excuses. The Ninth exacts from us an inviolable regard to truth, and the character of our fellow-creatures; a victory over the tongue, that world of iniquity, the tongue so impatient of restraint from the law of kindness. The Tenth condemns every covetous wish, all love to the things of the world, and every degree of discontent at our appointed situation.

It is evident from this brief account of the Ten Commandments, that there is not one moral precept in the Bible, which is more than an explicit declaration, of what in substance and intention was before enjoined in the law proclaimed by the mouth of the Lord of Hosts, on mount Sinai. Our Judge compels

us to allow this, by explaining the import of the Commandments written on the First table, as requiring us to love the Lord our God "with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our strength." In other words, with a love so fervent, as to desire nothing in comparison of his glory ; to regard him as our chief joy in prosperity, our all-sufficient portion in adversity, and his favor as better than life itself ; endeavouring, by all our services, and all the means which our understanding can discover, to bring men to the knowledge and love of his name.

Thus, according to the demands of this spiritual law, you see all our powers and faculties must be wholly engaged in the service, and to the honor of God.

The Commandments of the Second table, as our almighty Judge interprets them, oblige us to love our neighbour as we love ourselves, *i. e.* to pity his misery, compassionate his mistakes and infirmities, conceal his faults, and exercise every office of kindness to him in our power.

From this view of the Ten Commandments, the law appears altogether worthy of its author, who loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity ; who is at once jealous of the honor of his name amongst men ; and full of tender regard for their present and eternal welfare.

## SUNDAY XI.

## CHAP. XI.

## The several Uses of the Law.

**ONE** obvious and excellent use, is, to serve as a complete unchangeable standard of right and wrong. Whilst man possessed the glory he received from his Maker, a law engraven on tables of stone was needless, because the graces of his soul were a living copy of the law. As face answereth to face in the water, so did Adam's unsullied mind to the will of God. But with fallen man the case is entirely reversed. Instead of innate knowledge of truth, man, if left to himself, must labour by slow and multiplied deductions to know but a small part of his duty. His understanding is so defective in determining what is right and wrong, that things utterly detestable in our judgment, who have the pure light of the law, were practised and approved, without one dissenting voice, in nations most famous for knowledge and arts. A palpable proof, that man has no light in himself to find out a rule of life, which ought to be trusted. It is one grand design of the law from mount Sinai to supply this want; to deliver man from fallacious reasonings about duty; to demand his obedience to a rule of action complete, though short; and which, by virtue of its Author, equally excludes all doubt and all debate.

Another perpetual use of the law is to deter, by its tremendous curse, those persons from sinning against God, who disregard more generous motives. It represents the thunderbolt of divine indignation, as lifted up and ready to fall upon the presumptuous

offender. It brings men under dread of a Judge, who "will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation," whilst he keeps "mercy for thousands of them that love him, and keep his Commandments."

Now, though it must be confessed, the inclinations of the heart, when restrained by terrors, remain evil as before, yet much mischief, which would follow from indulging them, is prevented. Thousands who abhor no kind of villany, yet dare not disturb the peace of society by acts of violence, through fear of death. And ten thousands are kept from excess in wickedness by the threatenings, which are the sanction of the law of God.

To serve as a standard of right and wrong, and to deter from transgression, are uses which the law of God has in common with human laws. Besides these ends, there are others, which it is designed perpetually to answer. Yet, so mortifying, alas! to human pride, that we are brought with great difficulty to allow them. The scripture teaches us, that the law was given, that every mouth might be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God. It was given also to serve as a "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth."

It is plain, from the inspired apostle's arguing, that one principal design of the law was to confound all who trust in themselves as righteous, by fixing on them a conviction of sin, deserving and exposing to endless misery. For the apostle distinguishes the law of the Ten Commandments, from the ceremonial Jewish ones, by calling it the law written and engraven on two tables of stone. After this distinction, he calls it the ministration of condemnation, because it binds over every man living to suffer as a criminal, unless a sacrifice and mediator is found to interpose and save, 2 Cor. iii. 9.

Lest we should forget or evade a single declaration of this useful but offensive truth, or think slightly of that condemnation the law brings upon every transgressor, it is called "The Ministration of Death;" it arraigns and convicts all men, and then pronounces sentence of death upon them. And, lest it should be doubted whether we are to understand by death the damnation of hell, or only the dissolution of the body, this law of the Ten Commandments is called "the strength of sin." That formidable power which binds over every unpardoned offender to answer for his sins, and transmits him, after judgment, to suffer the bitter pains of hell; that power is the law. And to decide the point, that the grand design of the law was to prove our ruined condition, without redemption by Christ, believers are exhorted to abound in thankfulness to God, for giving them victory over this insupportable accuser, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is celebrated as an inestimable benefactor to his church, "not because he taught us" as never man did, or left us a perfect example to copy; not because he came to save all who trust on his arm from a seducing world, and the power of Satan. No, but mark with the utmost attention the gracious declaration, because "he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii 13.

Further, God has been pleased to use an admirable method for confirming the capital doctrines of his word, by recording an acknowledgment of their truth, from his most eminent saints. In this striking manner we are taught that the law of the Ten Commandments was given to convince men of their sinful state. St. Paul, by inspiration of God, is directed to relate his ignorance of this grand design of the law, and the change the knowledge of it produced in his mind. "I was alive," says he, "without the law

once :” I thought I was paying such an obedience to it, as, considering human infirmity, must upon the whole render me acceptable to God. “But when the Commandment came,” when its meaning, no less than high authority, was understood by me, “sin revived,” accused me with irresistible evidence of my guilt, “and I died ;” all my hope of life and salvation from my obedience vanished. I felt myself a ruined sinner before the holy law of God. “And the Commandment which was ordained to life,” originally designed to be a covenant of life upon perfect obedience, “I found to be unto death.” So far from justifying me, that it annulled every plea I confided in ; set aside every method I used for my relief, and condemned me to death eternal.

Should it be said (for what will not men say, rather than confess all their misery and vileness ?) that, in the passage above, the apostle speaks not in his own person, but in an assumed character: In answer, this apostle as strongly expresses the same truth in his epistle to the Galatians, speaking of himself, as was never doubted. “I, (says he) through the law, am dead to the law.” Understanding now the extent of its demands, and the grand design for which it was ordained, not to justify but condemn every soul of man ; I have done with all dependence upon it to acquit me from guilt, by any obedience I can pay, “I am dead to the law, that I might live unto God,” by faith in his Son.

But as the spirit of God well knew there would appear in all ages learned men, highly conceited of their own goodness, who would confine these declarations to the Jewish ceremonial law, in order to leave room for self-exalting ideas of Christian obedience ; to expose this false and pernicious construction, the apostle affirms such things of the law he means, as in no sense belong to the ceremonial law. For the

law he means, is given to stop every mouth, and bring in the whole world guilty before God. Whereas the ceremonial one will never condemn the Gentiles. He means a law which faith in Christ *establishes*, the same faith which *abolished* the Jewish law. To the law, he means, believing Romans were dead; but many of them in no degree ever submitted to the ceremonial one. The law he means, the man who obeys shall live, "and if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness thereof, his uncircumcision shall be counted for circumcision." It is a law which is spiritual, whereas the Levitical law wholly consisted of carnal ordinances.

There is not one of these properties by which St. Paul distinguishes the law *he means*, which can with any truth be applied to the ceremonial one; therefore, the law of the Ten Commandments, and its grand end, conviction of sin, can only be intended in this epistle. And, after such various testimonies, what clearer scripture evidence can reasonably be demanded in proof of this doctrine?

Before I proceed to explain the other grand design of the law, viz. of bringing sinners to seek salvation by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, it will be useful to make some observations upon the inexorable nature of the law, against which our pride and prejudice are ever ready to rise with great resentment.

You think it very hard, probably, that every reasonable creature of God should be under this law. But can less than perfect love, and its effect, perfect obedience, be due to our Maker? Suppose a law given, which would admit of imperfect obedience: it would then be impossible to determine what is sin, or what not; for sin is the transgression of the law. But if the law itself would be satisfied with sincerity of intention, or the best obedience a corrupted

creature could pay to it, then how could any transgression of it be defined? Since, upon this supposition, it is essential to the law to admit of imperfection and sin, under the notion of accepting sincerity.

Again, could we justly conclude, that God would overlook *one* transgression of his law, why not more? Where then shall we stop? Or who shall say how far we may, or may not go with impunity? And what must this prove in the end, but giving man a liberty and right to dispense with the law of God at pleasure, and in effect abrogate the whole?

It is a counsel, therefore, every way worthy infinite wisdom, to publish a law, the perfect representation of God's glorious holiness, annexing to every transgression of it the curse.

If you say this is giving up all men to destruction without exception, you quite mistake the matter. It is indeed to prove upon them, that they have destroyed themselves, and can find salvation only in the way which God reveals. For as he requires obedience alike at all times: and as scripture affirms, that *every act of disobedience* is a forfeiture of all claim to favor, and subjects us to punishment; in this extremity, what must we do? Where look for help? Can we say to God, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all?" Will you venture your soul upon the perfection of your own works? You dare not. This, you see at once, is giving yourself up to destruction. Perhaps you will fly to your *sincerity*, concluding that God, notwithstanding the confessed imperfections of your obedience, will accept you for your sincerity. But what *scripture warrant* have you to say, that though God required a perfect obedience to his law at one time, men are *now* discharged from that obligation, and will accept at their hands, what they in their sincerity offer him, though it be most unworthy of his acceptance, and far beneath the

demands of his perfect law? The thought is heaven-daring presumption, without especial ground from the word of God, where you will certainly find none for this novel and mischievous opinion.

Besides, what do you gain by it, unless you could answer for your sincerity to that God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, searching the heart? For (mark it well) if you make sincerity the ground of your acceptance with Him, you must stand or fall by it, and, on pain of eternal condemnation, are obliged to make it good, without failure or blemish. So that still you are upon no foundation for life, solid peace, or comfort.

What a merciful contrivance therefore is the law of God, as a ministration of condemnation and death. It acts like an engine of irresistible force to sweep away every refuge of lies, in which proud man would seek for safety only to his ruin. It compels all, who understand and hear its voice, to renounce those false and foolish pleas for obtaining mercy, which we shall be ashamed to think we could use, so soon as the light of truth shines into our hearts.



## SUNDAY XII.

### CHAP. XII.

The same Subject continued.

**WE** have already considered the perfection and the extent of the law. We have taken a view of it, as a rule determining our duty in all cases. We have produced scripture evidence, to prove it was also designed to humble the pride of man, and con-

vince him of his sinfulness and ruin. Its use extends still farther, by acting as a schoolmaster to bring to Christ. No sooner do we perceive ourselves cut off from every hope of mercy, which we were wont to entertain in conceit of our goodness, innocence, repentance, or sincerity, than we shall flee to the cross of Christ, and rejoice in the grace of God manifested by him. A scheme of marvellous love to man, called in scripture, "The righteousness of God without the law, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe." For knowledge of the law alarms the conscience, before asleep, dreaming of peace and safety, when there was no peace. Thus alarmed, the ear is opened to hear the word of reconciliation, and the heart disposed earnestly to apply to the Redeemer, as alone able to save from the insupportable and impending misery, the curse of the law. Repeated conflicts arise in the soul, feeling its obligations, on one hand to obey the commandment known to be holy, just, and good; and on the other, its own weakness and depravity. Hear in what an affecting manner St. Paul speaks of this intestine war in his own case, Rom. vii. 18. "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform [as the law requires] that which is good, I find not; for I delight in the law of God in the inner man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind." In other words, I perceive two contrary principles within me, one of God, the other my corrupt nature; this leading me forward to heaven, and approving the spiritual demands of the law; *that* opposing my progress, and rendering it impossible for me to fulfil the righteousness of the law. My soul is the field of battle, where my evil nature

continually exerts its efforts to conquer. In this case, what must be done, St. Paul instructs us by his own practice. He cries out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me \* from the body of this death?" And then raises himself from every desponding thought, by saying *I thank God*, that is for his grace, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*. This, this only can and will deliver me. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

The law of God is designed to bring all, who understand its nature and believe its high authority, into this pungent sensibility of their own sinfulness, that they may feel, what otherwise they never would, the necessity of redemption, and see its glory too; for by annexing a curse to the least breach of it, every door of hope is shut against us, excepting that which God hath proclaimed in the Gospel. The thunders and lightnings from mount Sinai, when they sound in our ears, make us account ourselves unspeakably blessed, in being allowed access to mount Zion, the church ransomed by the blood of Christ. "For the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe," Gal. iii. 22. The apostle, you are to observe, is proving, in this passage, that the law, of which the Jews made their boast, because delivered from Heaven to them alone, was so far from rendering salvation by Christ needless, or interfering with the grace of God, that, when

\* In answer to all which learned men (averse to the doctrine of great vileness in the best Christians) have said to set aside the testimony, it is fully sufficient to say, if St. Paul *did really speak in his own person*, he could not have expressed himself in other words—if he did not, he is the first and only man on earth, of sense, who by the expression, *I myself*, intended another person.

understood, it strongly acted in subserviency to both. Since, so great are our natural pride and self-sufficiency, so slight our thoughts of sin, and so extravagant our conceit of God's mercy, that if we did not perceive ourselves condemned, by the mouth of the Lord, to suffer eternal death for our transgressions, there is not one of the human race who would cordially submit to the righteousness of God. Notwithstanding every divine perfection so brightly displayed by him in our flesh, and all the pains he endured for our sins, and all the tender love he has expressed for our souls, there is not one of the human race who would give to him the honor of their salvation, unless he plainly saw he must have perished without him. Our Maker, knowing this to be the proud temper of man, has by his law actually shut us up in prison, as rebels against his government, under a total inability of making reparation for our treason. He hath done this, that our haughty spirit being humbled through experience of our condemnation, we might with thankfulness and adoration embrace salvation by the free grace of God, through the redemption which is in Jesus.

One passage more I will produce, full of instruction, and decisive upon this important subject. The apostle is establishing the grand privilege of Christ's church: "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." To this truth, he knew, many would object. They would say, how is this possible? since every believer falls short of perfect obedience, offends against the law, consequently must be liable to its curse. He answers, Believers are delivered from condemnation, by a new dispensation, introduced in the room of the old law, which promises and bestows pardon, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, the true life of the soul; "for the law of the

spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death :” that law which convinced me of sin, and doomed me to suffer death. Glad tidings indeed ! But does not this procedure deprive the law of its due honor, and skreen the offender from his deserved punishment ? By no means. “ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God (to whom nothing is impossible, has most wonderfully accomplished, by) sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to live among sinners,” to perform the perfect obedience due from them, “ and for sin” condemned sin in the flesh, charged and punished it with the utmost severity in the very nature which was guilty, disabled, and ruined. By this amazingly grand expedient, he has provided for the honor, and accomplished the obedience due to the law. All this was done to lay the surest foundation, and make the completest provision for our justification : “ That the righteousness of the law,” both its righteous sentence and precept, whatever either of suffering or obedience it required, being fulfilled by Christ, “ might be fulfilled in us.” As it was all done in our name, and as He and believers are one in civil estimation, for he is their representative ; and one in legal estimation, for he is their surety : theirs who walk not after the flesh, seeking justification before God by their own righteousness, but, in all humility and gratitude, receive eternal life, as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. viii. 2—4.

You have had now placed before you the scriptural account of the nature and design of the law. Nothing but pride, and the doctrines of men calculated to sooth that worst disease of our minds, can prevent your acknowledging, that the law is a divine contrivance, equally promoting the honor of God, and your own comfort in serving him. Since

whilst it allows no palliating excuses to diminish the evil of sin, or flatter our self-love, it opens a way of salvation exactly suited to our very imperfect state; it endears Christ to the soul, and magnifies and exalts to the highest degree the imputation of his righteousness, a special mercy of the new covenant. I shall conclude, therefore, this chapter, with a full confutation of a popular mistake of great influence on many, keeping them in their prejudices against the law, and from acknowledging the impossibility of being saved from its curse, only by Christ Jesus.

It is objected, then, that to teach men they are accepted of God, solely on account of the obedience which our Lord paid to it in his life and death, will weaken the obligations we are under to lead a holy life. I answer, it may, no doubt, be thus abused, and from the beginning has been by many. But what is it men have not most basely perverted? In what light will you place the patience and mercy of God, to render them less liable to licentious abuse? But, on this account, will you be jealous of those perfections as prejudicial to practical religion? Or will you deny them, because of their supposed bad tendency? The thought is dreadful, and the consequence universal destruction. It is just the same with the doctrine of the law, inferring the absolute necessity of being saved only by what the Redeemer has done, and suffered. Act in the same manner with respect to both; maintain the doctrines, detest and expose the abuse of them.

Besides, what will you gain in favor of practical religion, by giving up this scriptural account of the law? You will only set men at liberty to frame a law of their own, as in fact they do, subversive of all fear and love of God, or subjection to his authority. But that the scripture doctrine of the law as a ministration of death, compelling us to flee to the

Redeemer for pardon and spiritual life, has any bad tendency, is utterly denied by the apostles, and all who hold the truth as they did. Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? Do we then make void the law by faith? Yea, we establish the law. This is their constant reply to all who arraign the doctrine as licentious. Indeed it is chosen, and found by experience the only successful means of turning the heart to God in love. Its genuine operation is to bind us to him in everlasting bonds of gratitude, and willing obedience. It says, know your guilt and weakness, your desert and danger; think what you are bound to by the law, and what must be your end, if left under its power; then view the loving-kindness of God, in giving his own Son to fulfil all righteousness. Is it possible to sin against so much goodness? Granting it is, you must allow such a representation both of the justice and mercy of God (if any thing as a means can) will awake in men a thought of returning to God, bend their stubborn will, and make them hate iniquity.

Most unreasonable, therefore, is it to charge this doctrine with condemning all men to destruction, who will not confess their sinfulness, and seek to be saved through faith in Christ only, as a doctrine which relaxes the obligations to obedience, or in any degree favours licentiousness.

## SUNDAY XIII.

## CHAP. XIII.

The dangerous Mistakes, which, through Ignorance of the Law, govern our Minds.

**I**F you know not the perfection, nature, and end of the law, you will fatally mistake your real character before God. For if you have fallen into no infamous transgressions, but been esteemed for your regular conduct, how can you confess yourself a condemned criminal, merely because you have come short in duty, or have offended in many points, of little moment in the opinion of the world? For as the knowledge that judgment is come upon all men to condemnation, is only by the law; of consequence, unless you allow sinless perfection your bounden duty, and, on failure, your doom, death, you cannot appear in your own eyes, what you are in the sight of God, a lost sinner. Far from it, especially if you have had some sense of duty towards God, and refrained from sins common at your age and condition of life, then ignorance of the law will leave you under a fatal conceit of being safe. You will think all calls to repentance, addressed to those who have given themselves up to vices, from which you have been always free—or to those who have never led the innocent life from their youth up, which, in your own opinion, you have done. This delicious self-flattery will excite bitter resentment against all attempts to make you know yourself, and bring you before God with true humiliation and faith in his Son. Every thing of this kind will kindle your indignation, as a cruel design to wound your

peace, and a very unjust charge of wickedness upon you.

The force of so fatal an error will pervert also the advantages of a good education, the blessing of God's restraining grace, and make even that virtuous behaviour, which has gained you esteem, prove a greater obstacle in the way of our salvation than even gross wickedness proves to many; for gross wickedness carries its own condemnation with it. It has a tendency, on the first lucid interval to excite confession of guilt, and cries for mercy. Whereas a behaviour more regulated by the commandments, when the law is not understood, does but minister fuel to self-sufficiency, and self applause. Hence we read continually of the Scribes and Pharisees justifying themselves. Many of them were very regular in their lives, decent, and formally religious. Therefore, being ignorant of the law, they could see no need they had either of repentance, or his grace who came to save that which was lost. Exactly in the same false estimate of your condition, you must continue through the same ignorance, and either audaciously contradict scripture declarations, concerning the guilt and apostasy of the human race, or equivocate about them, till you have reduced them to a mere nothing.

On the contrary, when, in the apostle's emphatical language, "the commandment has slain you," you will confess, without hesitation, *all* your sinfulness. And whatever snares you may have escaped by good education, or restraints of grace, and whatever esteem you have gained amongst men, still you will know these advantages alter not your state respecting God. Though innocent of those iniquities which abound in the world, you are nevertheless a transgressor, justly liable to eternal punishment, if dealt with according to your deserts. Happy con-

viction of guilt, discharging in the conscience, the Baptist's beneficent office of old, preparing the way of the Lord, and rendering his name and salvation inestimably precious.

2. Ignorance of the law encourages hateful motives of obedience. By creation the blessed God has an indefeasible claim to all we have, and our entire subjection. This claim he has enforced by express command in all things to obey him. He has added also the strongest commendations of an obedient spirit, and promised to it an everlasting reward. But a most ungrateful perversion is too generally made of these gracious declarations and promises, till the law is understood; and what obedience is paid to the commandments, is paid upon principles, which render it odious in God's sight. For instance, some regard the precepts enjoining liberality, and will feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and rejoice the widow's heart, in order to atone for sensuality, saying, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Others are conscientiously true to their word, and faithful to all their engagements; flattering themselves, that such integrity will make pride and profaneness in them easily overlooked as venial infirmities: for the righteous Lord, say they, loveth righteousness, and a just weight is his delight. A third and worse sort, if possible, multiply exercises of devotion in commutation for justice and insincerity, malice, and covetousness, confiding in all the promises made to prayer and godliness.

From such hateful motives does that morality, humanity, and false devotion, of which thousands are so conceited, spring. Notions, which prove they have no sense of the sinfulness of sin upon their minds, which sooth their pride, by exalting the value of polluted obedience, and which even encourage transgression, by supposing we have it in

our power to make compensation for it. Yet, offensive to God as this mistake is, nothing can overturn the foundation which supports it, but knowledge of the law, which, denouncing a curse on every thing short of sinless perfection, leaves no ground for this vain imagination. By rejecting with dreadful menaces all human attempts to atone for a single violation of duty, it leaves no possibility of dreaming that obedience in some or many instances can make satisfaction for the want of it in others. It compels the little sinner to confess himself insolvent no less than the greatest; and that nothing can administer relief in his case, which is not equal to the demands of the law, and will not be accepted by it, *i. e.* the righteousness and blood of Christ Jesus our Lord.

3. Though you may possibly be free from the gross and common error of fancying some sins will be overlooked in the blaze of many virtues, still, through ignorance of the law, you will impiously conceit that your personal righteousness, and Christ's obedience, have equally weight with God, act in the same capacity, and, by their joint influence, procure your salvation. Many, in fact, under a strong sense of religion, do thus dangerously deceive themselves. They endeavour to do their duty in mortifying their lusts, and leading a devout life. On this account, though confessedly guilty in many points, their own goodness, they are confident, will contribute to recommend them to God; and what is wanting, the merits of Christ will make up. Of consequence, so long as they fall into no gross sin, but continue regular, honest, and attentive to religion, they are satisfied they have done their part, and that such worth is in their sincere, though imperfect obedience, as will procure them acceptance with God.

This refined error, unsuspected of danger, keeps

full possession of the mind, till swept away by knowledge of the law. Yet no error can abound more with self-contradiction, or affront to God. With palpable self-contradiction, since it supposes, that at the very time you confess yourself under the guilt of sin, for many omissions and defects, there can be still excellency enough about you to obtain favor with God: that even whilst conscience accuses, and the law condemns you *as a sinner*, your righteousness will have considerable influence in making reconciliation for you. Palpable contradiction! to confess yourself guilty, and implore pardon, yet expect to be favorably regarded for your works and life. To implore pardon, implies that you cast yourself at the feet of mercy, without any plea, but what is drawn entirely from God. To trust at all in your own obedience, as a coadjutor with Christ, certainly implies a high degree of worth in what proceeds from yourself.

Besides, by holding this error, your affront to God, is as notorious as the contradiction in which it involves you. According to this scheme, the glorious Redeemer undertook our ransom only to render our deficient duties meritorious, and our sins inoffensive. His life, sacrifice, and mediatorial undertakings, serve only as a pedestal on which human worth may stand exalted and recommended. According to this scheme, the pardon of rebels against the Most High, and the reception of leprous sinners into the bosom of Heaven (effects great indeed!) are owing to the work of our own hands, and the virtues of our own character, in conjunction with Christ.

Can a greater affront be offered to that divine goodness, which interposed to save us, when we were lost, than thus to divide the cause of our acceptance between Christ and ourselves? What more

daring opposition to God the Father, who hath given Christ for his salvation to the ends of the earth, than to trust in our own obedience as having a partial influence to procure it for ourselves? What more plain denial of scripture, which appropriates the salvation of sinners, from first to last, to the praise of the glory of God's grace in Christ Jesus? Compare this self-exalting doctrine with Isaiah's sublime account of the combat and conquest of the Redeemer, and then conclude how injurious to his honor it must be, to confide in your own works as coadjutors with him.

The prophet, in surprise at the appearance of a most majestic personage, asks, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" from the country and capital of the implacable foes to the Israel of God. The Redeemer replies, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." The prophet then renews his inquiry, "Wherefore [if thou art come not to destroy, but save] art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?" The Redeemer answers, "I have trodden the wine-press by myself alone." Infinitely too great in my power to want an associate, and infinitely too jealous of my honor to accept of any assistant; "of the people there was none with me:" the salvation of sinners is my act alone in every part; yours be all the benefit, mine the whole glory, Isa. lxiii. 1—3.

The inspired penmen uniformly teach the same doctrine. Yet so pleasing to the human heart is the thought of assuming a share to ourselves in the grand affair of our salvation, that nothing but the knowledge of God's law can make the attempt appear in its full absurdity and provocation. This indeed will, because it fixes with the greatest exactness the office of good works, and the place of human obedience.

The law will not suffer you to consider the most conscientious course of obedience in any other light, than as a proof that you believe, with godly sincerity, the delightful truth, that Jesus purged away your sins by the sacrifice of himself; for which inestimable benefit, you love him, you keep his commandments, you abhor those sins which caused him to groan, and bleed, and die.

To think and live thus is Christian obedience, of a quite different complexion from what every other kind of religion can produce. This is to use the law lawfully, not as interfering with the Redeemer, or shading his glory, by encouraging expectation of life from keeping the commandments, but as a clear revelation of the infinite demerit of sin, and the absolute need of Christ's interposition, "who is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth."

4. Self-preference and conceit of personal perfection in the saints, maintain their ground in men ignorant of God's law. The slightest observer of human nature will soon perceive our ruling passion is, to have the pre-eminence in all things. Hence, not only beauty, wealth, learning, or noble birth, but even spiritual attainments, become strong temptations to pride. Of old, we find a numerous party amongst the Jews, conscious of their superior goodness, crying out, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou," Isa. lxxv. 5.

The same persons judged it impossible the chief of sinners should be pardoned, and treated them with disdain. That proud spirit is not extinct, but governs many at this day, who stand distinguished for strict religion. To purge out this leaven of the Pharisees, the law is of sovereign use. To tell those who highly esteem themselves for their religious excellencies, that they owe them all to God, is

not sufficient. The Pharisees allowed it, yet took much complacency in themselves on that very account. Neither is it sufficient to remind them, that many blemishes cleave to and defile their best services, so that they have no pretensions to self-esteem. For these things they will place to the score of human infirmities, still proudly dwelling, in their own minds, on the manifest difference betwixt themselves and others. But when you lay the axe to the root of this evil tree, when you convince such self-conceited professors, that after all they have received or done, they are not only imperfect, but *lost*, if dealt with according to their deserts; since they, no more than the vilest felon, can say they have continued in all things written in the book of the law, consequently they have incurred its curse; and perpetually want, as much as any upon earth, the blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, for their justification.

Thus self-esteem and self-preference, in every state, and in every soul of man, is excluded. Since, whatever difference there may be between sinners, respecting *degrees* of guilt or excellency, the law suffers no man living to imagine he stands accepted with his Maker, on account of his own good life or temper.

5. The conceit of personal perfection also in the saints (that offspring of spiritual pride) is owing in part to ignorance of the law. For such polluted creatures as we are, after our highest attainments, could never possibly dream we were free from all charge of sin, if we knew the full extent of our duty, what, in every instance, and on all occasions, the law requires: that we are commanded not only to serve the Lord, but to serve him with all our strength; not only to love our neighbour, but to love him as ourselves, and *demonstrate* we do both

by every word, desire, temper, and thought: In short, that it requires us to live up to the very height of that adorable example set before us in the man Christ Jesus, and be to the full as holy as he was himself, since he only fulfilled the perfect law: Who can know this, and say there is no iniquity in me? Who can know this, and not readily acquiesce in that very humbling confession inspired by the Holy Ghost. "There is not a just man upon earth, that liveth and sinneth not? If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee [equally needed by every child of Adam] that thou mayest be feared."

From what has been advanced, it is evident, if you desire to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, upon rational and sound conviction, you must acquaint yourself with the nature and design of the law God spake from mount Sinai, as explained and enforced in Holy Writ. Then, like a faithful mirror, it will give you to see all your poverty and sinfulness. It will make the mercy of God in Christ Jesus appear as great, and necessary, and glorious, as the Bible declares it is. Then you will live by faith in the Son of God, pleading, with all humility at the throne of grace, his sacrifice and perfect righteousness, the sure and only foundation of hope towards God.

And as a son, who, through folly and extreme baseness of mind, has brought himself into a state of disease and ruin, duly affected with his condition, will most thankfully acknowledge the kindness of his loving parent, who, notwithstanding all, receives him home, and embraces him with love unfeigned: So, the sight of your own sinfulness, manifested by the law, will excite in you intense desires to live to God, who had compassion on you, and loved your person, when not one single feature

of comeliness was about you, and, in the midst of much inherent depravity, loves you still. Thus those two universal and mighty principles of disobedience, self-conceit, and self-esteem, will be expelled, and a rational humility, the excellent ground of every fruit of righteousness, will be secured. Convinced, beyond a doubt, that if judgment be laid to the line, and you were called upon to answer in every article of duty, according to what you owe, you must be found exceedingly wanting; you will adore, love, and obey him, who hath redeemed you from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for you, to an eternal inheritance.

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## PRAYER,

Suited to the preceding Chapters on the Law.

O GOD, glorious in holiness, jealous of thy honor, yet full of mercy, Thou hast given us a law holy as thyself. Give us, we beseech thee, the knowledge of its perfection and design, that we may utterly cease from every expectation of escaping the punishment due to our transgression by our obedience. O let the time past suffice to have been so long alive without the law. Now may we place all our hope of acceptance with thee, on that sure foundation thou hast laid in Sion, on that tried chief corner-stone, the crucified Jesus. O may this great, this only fulfiller of the law, be always our peace, our righteousness, all our salvation, and all our desire. Him may we love and serve: and always rejoice, knowing, that whilst the righteousness of the law saith, the man who doth these things shall live by them, the righteousness of faith saith, if thou

shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

And the nearer the all-decisive hour approaches, when we must give account of ourselves to God, so much the more may we long to be found, not under the law, but under grace; not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that, to the confusion of all the enemies of our souls, it may appear, in the presence of men and angels, that we are passed from death to life, and shall not come into condemnation.

We beseech thee, O God, to have compassion upon all who have religious zeal, but without knowledge; who being ignorant of thy righteousness, are going about to establish their own, and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. Give them to know, they never can find peace or safety upon any foundation they can lay with their own hands; for the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. Lead them to the Rock that is higher than themselves, to the Lord our righteousness.

Finally, we entreat, that thou wouldst convert from their pernicious error, all who wrest the infinite purity of thy law, to their own destruction: who not only reject it as a covenant of works, but as a rule of life; who, in their mad and impious folly, despise and deride that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Teach them, that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully. Convince them, that all who are dead to the law, by the body of Christ, are married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that they should *bring forth* fruit unto God.

Hear and answer, O King of Heaven, these our

requests, for the sake of Jesus Christ the righteous, our advocate, and the propitiation for our sins. Amen.



## SUNDAY XIV.

### CHAP. XIV.

Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ascertained from  
Scripture Testimony.

**I**N almost every page of scripture, excellent things are spoken of the power of faith. And whatever some may boast of their shining deeds, and meritorious virtues, extolled for their good effects in society; still, so long as the authority of the Bible remains, it is a decided point, that to be without faith in Christ, is to be actually exposed to the wrath of God.

Every one, therefore, ought most carefully to inform himself what is the nature of this fundamental grace. The plainest and shortest method to determine so important a matter, I apprehend, will be to ascertain what they did, who are highly commended by our Lord Jesus Christ for their faith in him, and in what they offended, whom he rebuked for their unbelief. When these two points are fixed, the nature of faith will be so far laid open, as to prevent erroneous opinions concerning it; and deliver serious minds from that perplexity, which, amidst continual disputes about faith, they find it difficult to avoid.

The first example, I shall select, to determine precisely the nature of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is the Centurion, mentioned, Matt. viii. Warned

with benevolence, and touched with sympathy for an afflicted servant in his own family, he earnestly applied to the Redeemer, begging him to take pity on the case, and heal his servant, whom he had left grievously tormented with the palsy. The faith which inspired this request, though perfectly known to Jesus, was not to the surrounding multitude. They could not say, whether he might not come, glad, as one in a desperate case, to catch at any thing for relief. Our Lord, therefore, replies to him in such a manner, as he knew would bring forth full proof of his faith: "He saith, I will come and heal him." But the amiable modesty of this great believer will not suffer him to think of the honor of receiving such a guest under his roof. He answers, therefore, that it was wholly unnecessary for Jesus to trouble himself "to come; Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Adding, that he was not less assured of Christ's power over all bodily diseases, both to inflict and remove them at his pleasure, than of his own authority to command his soldiers.

"When Jesus heard it, he marvelled:" at the infinitely grand and just idea, which this Roman captain conceived of his power, who was in outward appearance the poorest of men. To make his faith, therefore, most conspicuous through all ages, and at the same time precisely define the nature of faith, by which every member of the church is saved, "Jesus said unto them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, many shall come from the East and the West [partakers of the same precious faith you now see exercised towards me] and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

But the faith of this Centurion was neither more

nor less than absolute dependence upon Christ, as able to heal his sick and dying servant. Consequently, at all times, and in all persons, true faith in Christ is the dependence of the heart upon him for continual help in all our need.

This is again strongly confirmed by the memorable instance of the Canaanitish woman. Hearing that Jesus was in the country bordering upon her abode, she came unto him, saying, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David. My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." But, contrary to his behaviour in every other case, he answered her not a word. "And his disciples [more benevolent in appearance than their divine Master] came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us. Regard her anguish, and grant her request." In his reply, he seems absolutely to refuse her request, giving for a reason, that his ministry was to be confined to the Jews. And when again entreated by her, he adds, in a still more discouraging tone, "That it was not meet for him to display his mercy amongst the Heathen, who, by their idolatry, and other detestable pollutions, were become like dogs before God. This he was to exercise towards Israel only, the children of God by covenant and profession.

The woman replies, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Permit me only to share the privilege which dogs enjoy in a family. Amidst the plenty of miraculous cures bestowed by thee on Israel, thy children, drop one on me, a poor distressed *Heathen*, by which act of beneficence, they will suffer no more loss, than the children of a family do by a few crumbs cast to the dogs.

"Then Jesus answered, O Woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt," Mat. xv.

21. But what was her faith? A patient, resolute, invincible trust for relief upon the grace she knew dwelt so richly in him, notwithstanding the greatest discouragements to trust any longer. This, therefore, no less clearly than the former instance, determines, that faith in Jesus Christ precisely means reliance of the heart on him for help and deliverance.

The fault charged on those who are rebuked by him for *unbelief*, proves as strongly the same thing. In St. Mark we read that our Lord, fatigued with his abundant labours of love, fell asleep as he was in a ship with his disciples. A storm in an instant arises. Now, the raging billows toss them up to the clouds, then, parting, let them sink, till they are almost buried in the deep. The disciples exert, in vain, their utmost skill to manage the vessel. The waves fill her, that she was beginning to sink, when, giving themselves up for lost, they ran shrieking out to Jesus, "Master, master, we perish." Their cries awoke him. He instantly rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a calm. Immediately he turns upon his disciples with this reproof, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it, that ye have no faith?" Mark iv. 38.

In this instance, want of assurance in the power of Christ to save them, even when destruction had opened its jaws to swallow them up, and a doubt of his ability to gather the stormy wind in his fist, and bind the raging flood from overflowing them, when they were almost overwhelmed in the sea: It was this which our Lord rebukes, as a demonstration of their unbelief. And very justly too; since, after the wonders they had seen him do, and his promises of love to them, they ought to have known his power could deliver them in the time of their distress, though the vessel had foundered, and save them all, as he afterwards did one of their number,

by making them walk on the waves, as on solid land.

To avoid being tedious, only one instance more shall be produced, but decisive on the point.

In St. Mark, ch. ix. we read, that a father, in anguish for his son possessed with a devil, brought him to the apostles, that they might heal him. Upon finding them unable, he, dispirited by the remembrance of his dear child's long continued misery, was afraid this case might surpass also the power of Jesus to cure. "The father therefore saith unto him, If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth, [*i. e.* depends upon my all-sufficient power.] And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." Now I can trust in thee as able to help me. With shame I lament the remaining unbelief which I feel struggling against me. O forgive it, and take it all away. Thoroughly cure both me and my son; me of my spiritual, him of his corporeal disease.

I know not a single instance in the New Testament either of faith extolled, or unbelief reproved, where the nature of this fundamental grace is not precisely fixed to be the affianced of the soul in Christ, for help and deliverance.

Should it be said the Centurion and Canaanitish woman shewed their *trust*; the disciples in the tempest, and the distressed father their *unbelief*, in things temporal; therefore, they are not proper examples to determine the nature of that faith, to which the salvation of the soul and eternal life are promised: the answer is obvious—Difference in the nature of benefits implored certainly infers no difference at all in the principle of faith by which they are earnestly

sought. Noah built the ark ; Abraham offered his son ; and Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, from one and the same principle of faith. The acts though totally different in kind, were the glorious effect of one single cause.

In like manner, whether reliance on the power of Christ be for deliverance in things spiritual or temporal, from wants in number less or more, it is still the very same temper of heart, exercising itself on the same glorious object.

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## SUNDAY XV.

### CHAP. XV.

#### The extent of Faith in Christ.

**T**HIS reaches as far as our necessities, of which a particular knowledge is needful ; and the use of faith to obtain a supply for them all being considered, we shall have as ample and distinct a view of this grace as can be given.

Compare then your life, the tempers, desires, and purposes of your heart, with the law of God, the rule of your duty. Accusations against you will immediately pour in from every side. Each commandment, as Christ himself explains it, charges you with innumerable sins of commission or omission. God and your own conscience tells you that your offences have not been merely mistakes and inadvertencies, but provoking expressions of unbelief, pride, self-love, and self-will, rebelling against his government.

To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is, under

heart-felt grief for all this sinfulness, and in abhorrence of it, to depend on his blood as the only propitiation which God hath set forth for sin. It is to use only this plea. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. It is in steady rejection of every hope built upon your own good qualities or repentance, or simply the mercy of God, to place your whole confidence in Christ, made sin, though he knew no sin, that all who believe on his name, might be made (in spite of mountainous obstacles, dismaying to behold) the righteousness of God in him. It is under consciousness of perpetual defilement in yourself, and infinite purity in God, to regard Christ as your passover, and his blood your whole safeguard from deserved wrath, as the faithful Israelites of old sprinkled the blood of the lamb on their door, as their protection from the destroyer.

Equal in degree to your guilt, you will confess is your ignorance in things spiritual. That your apprehensions of God are exceeding low; your conceptions of his law, sin, and your own demerit, all deplorably wrong; that numberless prejudices remain in your heart against the truth; and an inordinate affection to earthly things, weakening the impressions which things eternal ought constantly to make on your mind.

In these circumstances, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ means dependence upon him, as one able to enlighten your understanding, and secure you from all the delusions of your own false reasonings. It is to look up to him for instruction, who came into the world, that all who believe in him should not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. It is, with the simplicity of a child, to believe just what he tells you is the truth, without a murmur, or a doubt. It is every day, as absolutely to depend on the teaching of Christ by his word and spirit, as pupils do on

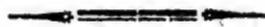
the lectures of a professor most famous for knowledge in his science.

Earnest endeavours to obey the commandments of God, without which, external religion and a sober behaviour are vain, will soon convince you of your own weakness. You will feel your nature violently prone to evil, and the desires of your heart often shameful. You will see yourself surrounded with temptations to transgress, and many strong discouragements against paying obedience in all things to your Maker's will. You will soon find it is a work far surpassing human power to alter the course of nature, by bringing back that heart to God which has been alienated from him; by making your will, almost lawless before, bow in all things to his righteous commands: and after having walked in the paths of self-indulgence, as the only paths of pleasure, to oppose its suggestions, and in humility bewail them. Yet this inward change alone is true holiness; all short of it, partiality and hypocrisy.

Acquainted then with the nature of true religion, you will earnestly enquire how you shall be ever able to perform your duty? Faith in Christ is dependence upon him, in those circumstances, to purify your heart, to give you victory over every corruption of nature, a blessing no less to be desired than pardon of all sin. It is daily to make application to him, in assurance that he is able to save your soul from the tyranny of beloved lusts, though all other methods used have utterly failed; and that he will sanctify you wholly, make you entirely devoted to himself, and preserve you blameless in understanding, soul, and body.

Thus far the extent of faith in Christ respects our condition here. But as this life must very soon end, when either the dismal effects of uncanceled and unconquered sin must be eternally endured, or the

unsearchable blessings of redemption be fully enjoyed: In this view, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ enlarges itself by firmly depending on his love for an abundant provision when earthly comforts fail, and present objects cease. It rests assured on his naked word, that your separated spirit shall not wander desolate in the unknown world, nor your dead body remain for ever a prisoner in the grave; on the contrary, that the one shall be raised and fashioned by him into a perfect resemblance of his own glorious body; and the other be admitted into that blessed kingdom, where his infinite wisdom and almighty power make the bliss of his saints exceed all we can imagine. It is, in habitual expectation of death, to commend your spirit into his hands, knowing he is able to keep that which you have committed unto him unto that day.



## SUNDAY XVI.

### CHAP. XVI.

Great advantages from receiving Christ's own Definition of Faith in his Name.

**SEVERAL** scripture instances have been produced above, of those our Lord commended for their faith, or reproved for their unbelief, proving it means a constant dependence upon his power and grace for relief in all our need. In this chapter, I shall point out the great advantages of receiving this definition of faith, and being established in its truth.

This definition of faith in Christ is easy to be understood by all mankind, and in its very nature ex-

cludes every abuse of faith, whilst it gives comfort and assurance to the mind, and ascribes to Christ that glory in the salvation of sinners, which is so fully ascribed to him in the word of God.

Men of learning frequently condemn the laying great stress on the doctrine of faith, as very perplexing to those of no education. They tell us, after all we can say about it, common people will be still at a loss to conceive what faith in the Son of God means. Could this objection be made good, it would overturn the whole credit of the gospel; because it perpetually inculcates faith as the root of all excellencies, and affirms the want of it to be the death of the soul. And certain it is, that whatever is of such moment to the salvation of all, must be level to the capacity of every one who will diligently attend to information. But what place is there for this objection, when the idea of faith in Christ means only constant dependence upon him, to receive wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? Are not the poor as well acquainted to the full, as the learned or rich, with the nature of promises, and the confidence they deserve, when given by men of integrity and power? Is the meanest capacity at any loss clearly to conceive, that children who would learn must entirely depend upon their teacher? Or that insolvent debtors must go to prison, or stand beholden to some surety, or some act of grace? That those who cannot resist their enemies in their own strength must seek for defence to one mightier than they? By transferring these very common ideas to the Redeemer, you have a full distinct idea of faith in his name. And supposing the grounds for putting your whole trust in him such as all may equally perceive their force (a point which will be proved hereafter), then no one can say with truth,

there is any obscurity in the nature of the faith Christ requires, or its immoveable foundation.

2. The scriptural idea of faith in Christ, as a constant dependence on him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, excludes all abuses of the doctrine of salvation by faith. That many and grievous ones should prevail, is not strange, since the incomparable blessings promised to it work like so many bribes upon our self-love, to make us deal dishonestly, and in want of the reality, embrace a counterfeit. But all false notions of faith, when compared with the above definition of its nature, stand at once detected and exposed.

For instance, speculative faith is apt generally and fatally to deceive, without suspicion. When a learned reasoner has compared the glorious prophecies of Christ, with the events which prove their exact accomplishment; has canvassed his miracles and doctrine, till his conviction of the truth is complete; this learned reasoner, probably, will be very confident he is a true believer in Christ, though his ruling passions utterly disgrace his faith, and give all witnesses of his example cause to think his religion contemptible.

To convince a man of this sort, that he shamefully imposes upon himself by calling his knowledge and assent to evidence, faith in Christ, will, I grant, be difficult. Yet, so far as means can be of use to effect the conviction of such deplorable self-abuse, it must be proving that his acquaintance with scripture prophecies, miracles, and doctrines; his ready acknowledgment that Jesus is the Christ; and alacrity in defence of his gospel against the whole army of infidels; still leave him upon the same ground, where all stand who despise revelation, *i. e.* just as much a stranger to any daily dependence upon Jesus Christ; that he, no more than impious scoffers,

humbly looks up, as a poor, ignorant, helpless, sinful creature, for relief of his necessities, to the all-sufficient Saviour. Consequently this speculative, learned, self-satisfied believer, may perceive that faith in the Son of God, which the scripture requires to the saving of the soul, is a thing entirely different from giving assent to the gospel as the truth of God. The latter may be given by the vilest of men in all their villany; the former can be possessed only by the humble and contrite in spirit, who long after true liberty and the salvation of God.

3. By the same way of trial, another detestable abuse of faith in Christ, to which love of sin inclines us all, will be fully detected. No sooner was the name of Christ preached to the Heathen world, and glorified by the conversion of vast multitudes, than Satan, jealous of his own empire, prevailed over a large body of professing Christians to boast that they had faith, and were complete in Christ, whilst they lived in contempt of his authority. They loudly vaunted that Christ's righteousness was theirs, while they despised, disdained, and, with infernal malice, hated holiness, the image of God. In every revival of Christ's religion, the same accursed error has revived with it: what is said of envy respecting great merit?

Envy's the shadow, proves the substance true, holds good in this point. Wherever the true gospel is enforced, this dreadful abuse of it will certainly make its appearance in some degree.\*

\* St. Paul, St. James, St. Peter, and St. John, saw this detestable perversion of gospel grace, and give, in all their epistles, an antidote against its poison. In Germany and England, some time after the glorious Reformation, the infernal delusion of Antinomian faith spread much. Far, therefore, is this licentious abuse from being a reason for not preaching the doctrines of grace. But it is a constant call upon Christ's ministers, clearly to explain, and by a scriptural idea of faith, guard their people, and expose the devices of the wicked.

This delusion, very properly called *Antinomian* faith, from its avowed opposition to the control of God's law, can find no reception, nor ever be mistaken for faith in Christ, as faith means constant dependence on him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Because nothing can be more opposite to this disposition of mind respecting our Saviour, than the blasphemous falsehood that you are to depend upon him for no communications of grace. Nothing can be more contrary to the faith so extolled by his own lips, than the infatuation which leads you to conclude you need not look to his power for victory over every evil and corrupt desire. Nor can any thing so effectually abolish all intercourse between the Redeemer and the redeemed, than so to interpret the efficacy of his divine obedience and precious blood, as if no purification of the soul was needful. This licentious notion, in its very nature, absolutely excludes all application to the Redeemer, consequently all dependence upon him. However, then, many may vehemently contend for this notion, as the only *pure faith*, it certainly has not one single property of scriptural faith in Christ.

4. It is common to mistake opinions, received only from education, for faith in Christ Jesus. Engrossed by earthly pursuits, most men feel not the importance of revealed truth. They take, therefore, the national religion for granted, be it what it may, and regularly conform to all its institutions. After having done so for a course of years, they absurdly take it also for granted, that nothing less than true Christian faith could have kept them so long worshippers of God, without ever calling the doctrines of the Bible in question: whilst the fact is, gross carelessness, sensuality, or immoderate application to business, or love of money, would never suffer

them to think religion a subject deserving serious attention.

If you interrogate such deluded, but confident formalists, whether they were ever painfully convinced of their natural ignorance of God, great guilt, and depravity of heart before him? Whether they are wont, with grief, to confess the provocation of their sins, the power of their evil tempers, and, in view of both, depend on Jesus alone to save them? These leading questions will at once lay bare the lies which they make their refuge, and prove, that what they call faith in Christ, is nothing but vain and despicable credulity, founded on education, and the traditions of men.

Further, if you ask any one of these self-satisfied formalists in religion, who assume to themselves the name of believers in Jesus, why do you think yourself in a safe state? He will answer, that he has used his best endeavours to lead a good life, and that God is merciful, and knows our frailty. An answer which flatly contradicts the scripture. That, so far from teaching us to expect pardon merely because God is merciful, or we endeavour to lead a good life, proclaims Christ's death on the cross a substitute for sinners, is the one only possible means of reconciliation with God. So far from intimating that our unassisted endeavours will succeed, it commands us constantly to seek the Lord and his strength. Judge, therefore, what a mere delusion is the faith of formalists in religion, since it leaves them ignorant how their sins are to be pardoned, or victory over them obtained.

5. There is still another mistake about the nature of faith in Christ, which this plain scriptural idea of it discovers, and, without encouraging sloth or formality in religion, refutes. Men of the best intentions, and with hearts warm for the good of souls,

have represented faith in Christ to be a particular revelation to every individual believer, the moment he does in truth believe, whereby the forgiveness of his sins is made self-evident upon the force of inward feeling *only*.

That the blessed God can impress on the mind so strong a sense of pardon, as to make his dear obedient children certain of their salvation, none but those will doubt, who take upon them to limit the mercy and power of the Almighty, and prescribe to his wisdom. That, in many instances, *he is pleased* thus to manifest his name and love, none can dispute who have known the lives or deaths of the excellent among his saints. By this, martyrs have been able to sing in the flames: by this, thousands are kept faithful to God and duty, amidst scoffs from the formal, and insults from the profane.

Indeed, men must first strangely undervalue the salvation of their souls, and the love of God, who can rest satisfied, till they know their sins are forgiven. Nevertheless, it is one thing *to feel the joy of pardon*; another, to know you depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ only, for pardon and supply of all your wants. One thing to exult in God's love to your soul; quite another to call upon him, who is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins to all who believe in his name. And to say, real faith in him can be evidenced no otherwise than by feeling an immediate testimony of pardon, is as gross a mistake, as to suppose no credit can be given to the *written* promise of a friend any longer than you hear him enforce it with repeated declarations of his affection for you. In every other case, this would argue violent distrust of the promise-maker: How then can it be the only test of faith in Christ?

It was needful here to guard against this mistake

of the nature of faith in Christ, because, when the power of religion revives, may lay too great a stress on the knowledge of forgiveness of sins, through the force of an inward feeling; many make it their whole business to seek the proof of their pardon in such sensations, not from the written word explained and applied by the Holy Ghost, and speak as if nothing was worth acknowledging as a gracious gift from above, whilst men are strangers to such an evidence of their pardon. Others (we must own with grief) have by this mistake dreadfully imposed upon themselves, in taking a strong emotion of joy for faith, though ignorant of the evil of sin, and strangers to all humiliation for it. In the same mistake, a third class have been overwhelmed with terrors, and led for a long time cruelly to pass sentence upon themselves, as persons concluded in unbelief, and without Christ, at the very time they were depending upon him as all their salvation; consequently, according to the scripture idea of faith, were true believers.

Another great advantage arising from this scripture definition of faith in Christ, is the *establishment* of believers in peace. Christ promises, to all who receive him, more than an equivalent in this world, for every thing they may lose, or suffer for his sake, and eternal life in the next; assuring them that reconciliation is made for their iniquity; that they are, without ceasing, the object of God's care and love, and the heirs of glory. But assurance that these blessings belong to any particular person, depends wholly on the certainty the person possesses of having true faith in the Son of God. If this point be brought into doubt, his peace departs, his comfort dies away; because all the promises of God's special love belong to them alone, who are in Christ Jesus.

It is no doubt with any member of his church, whether a true believer is accepted of God. But the doubt so cruelly perplexing to serious minds, and chilling to their hopes, is, whether they are believers or not. In order, then, to secure to the faithful, that peace which the word of God declares they have a full right to enjoy, the evidence which proves the reality of faith must be both clear and permanent. Of this perfect kind, is the evidence which accompanies a lively dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ, to supply all our spiritual wants. No one can possess it, without being conscious he does so; for it implies an intimate interesting connexion between Christ and the soul; a knowledge of him affecting the heart, and full of influence, a daily and persevering application to him. Whoever therefore lives in this dependence upon Christ, might as reasonably call in question the reality of what passes between himself and his friends on earth, as whether he is a believer in Jesus. This is an evidence also no less *abiding* than clear; because, dependence upon Christ, and application to him, do not vary as spiritual consolations do. No believer returns to the love of sin, after having called, with sorrow and deep humility, upon the Redeemer to deliver him from its curse and power; nor revolts to a legal trust in himself as righteous, after having cordially submitted to the righteousness of God. By consequence, one actually involved in gloom, and tormented with fear, lest he should have no part in Christ, because he feels no transport, or is troubled with doubts; will be able (when he knows the nature of faith) to prove himself a believer, by proving his whole dependence for salvation is on Christ alone. And from an establishment in this truth, the very joy whose absence he was mourning will spring up, flourish, and, like a fragrant flower in its proper soil, yield a

delightful odour. He will be able, with the highest satisfaction, to say, "In the Lord's word will I rejoice, in the Lord's word will I comfort me."

Besides, active trust on the Lord Jesus Christ for present supply of our wants, proves, from its success, an abiding source of assurance to the mind which possesses it. For every sinner first exercises trust in the Redeemer in a necessitous condition. He would never cast himself a suppliant at his feet, could he be safe without his protection, or satisfied without his peace. Upon such application, the promise of God engages that the things asked for shall be received. Accordingly, when you depend upon Jesus as your prophet, very soon wisdom from above will be given to you, and an understanding of the way of life will in some measure be bestowed. Very soon the world, sin, and your own heart, will appear to you in a new light : God, in his perfections, his works, and gospel, will be seen exceedingly glorious, and your gross ignorance of the Father, Son, and Spirit, will be removed. A witness this in yourself, that your dependence on Jesus has not been in vain.

In like manner, when first awakened, your conscience was full of fears, and you could have no comfortable communion with God ; but, by dependence on the merits of Christ's blood, you have access to God with confidence. So, strength and power to deny yourself for Jesus' sake, and the change of a lawless will into meek subjection, (another immediate effect of dependence on Christ), proves demonstration, that you have actually received what is promised to the faithful.

It must be added, that this constant dependence on our Lord Jesus Christ for supply of all our wants, and deliverance out of all our woes, ascribes to him

such glory in our salvation, as the scripture expressly declares he shall receive from his church.

This will appear from considering a few remarkable passages in the Old and New Testament concerning Christ.

In the seventy-second Psalm, it is foretold of the Redeemer, that when his name should be preached, "prayer shall be made to him continually, and daily shall he be praised;" a glorious prediction indeed! which can receive its accomplishment only by the continual dependence of the church, on Christ, for wisdom, righteousness, and strength, and continual gratitude and praise to him for such supplies.

Isaiah abounds with emphatical declarations of the perpetual alliance which the church should place in Christ. He expresses the conversion of the Heathen world to the true faith thus: "The isles shall wait upon me, and upon my arms shall they trust." The same prophet relates the Redeemer's grand proclamation, where majesty and mercy appear in their brightest forms. His proclamation runs thus: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return; unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness, and strength, unto him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and in him shall they glory," Isa. xlv.

Here the Son of God presents himself in all the glory of his divine person, and all the efficacy of his grace, as the object of faith, and the author of salvation. "Look unto me," says he, "wretched, ruined transgressors; look unto me dying on the cross as your victim; not by your own strength or

virtue, but by dependence on me, be ye saved, cleansed from guilt, reconciled to God, rescued from the dominion of sin."

Do you ask, who are invited to partake of this inestimable benefit? "All the ends of the earth:" people of every nation under heaven, of every station in life, of every condition, and of every character, not excepting the chief of sinners.

Do you ask, is it possible that in a way so short, so simple, merely by dependence on Jesus Christ, innumerable millions should be saved? It is not only possible, but certain, "for I am God;" therefore all-sufficient to save all who come unto me, be the multitude ever so great, or their cases ever so desperate. "And besides these there is none other." Such is my compassionate call. And this is my inviolable decree; I have not only spoken, but "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness;" that word which relates to the grandest of all subjects, and the most important of all interests, is planned, adjusted, and unalterably determined—It shall not return, neither be repealed by me, nor frustrated by any other. "To me every knee shall bow:" every soul of man, in order to inherit eternal life, shall submit to, and depend wholly upon me, as on obnoxious criminal, as an indigent creature, and obtain salvation wholly through my atonement. "To me every tongue shall swear:" renouncing every other trust, they shall confide in me alone, and publicly profess they do so before the world. And this shall be the form of their oath, and the tenor of their heart-felt confession; each member of my church shall say, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness;" the expiation of all my iniquities, the obedience the law demands, and strength for increasing improvement, and sanctification of soul.

To this sovereign decree, the prophet sets to, as it were, his seal, and, in a transport of joy, foretels the accomplishment of it. "To him," this great and gracious Redeemer, "shall men come." I see them flying as clouds for multitude, and as doves for speed. They believe the report of his gospel, and receive of his fulness. "Whilst all they who are incensed against him," not able to brook such absolute dependence upon him, nor bear his holy government, shall be ashamed. The fig-leaves of their own virtues and endowments shall neither adorn them for glory, nor skreen them from wrath; but abandon them to vengeance, and cover them with confusion; whilst all the seed of Israel, the whole company of true believers, shall be justified in the Lord. Against them no accusation shall be valid, or condemnation take place; far from it, for so magnificent is the Saviour's majesty, and so beyond our ideas the merits of his life and death, that in him they shall not only confide, but glory; not only be safe, but triumphant; able to challenge every adversary, and to defy every danger.

For this admirable exposition (though a little altered) of a very capital scripture, the reader is indebted to the late seraphic Mr. Hervey.\* But with or without this striking comment, it proves, beyond a doubt, that Jesus Christ must be acknowledged the Author of all our salvation; it marks, in the strongest lines, that true faith in him is the perpetual dependence of the soul on his grace and power. It proves also, that to conceive any thing to be faith in Christ, which does not amount to an absolute constant dependence on him, is to contradict this authentic and full representation of faith; to degrade the importance of Christ to his church; and greatly

\* See his Letters to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, p. 33.

obscure if not abolish, his glory. For to suppose it is Christian faith to allow Jesus was no impostor in what he taught, or even that his death was a vicarious sacrifice for sin, is to give him very little glory, in comparison of maintaining uninterrupted dependence upon him. In one light, he appears only like a common benefactor, to whose past generous deeds and toils we stand greatly indebted. In the other, he is our *continual support*, of whom we may say in triumph, "The Lord is my light and my life, whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?"

The New Testament perfectly concurs with the Old, to place Christ in this glorious point of view before us. St. Paul and St. Peter represent the faith of the Christian church as the same incessant dependence upon the Lord Jesus, which the several parts of a lofty temple bear upon its foundation, Eph. ii. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 4. They again explain this dependence by the union which the members of the body have with the head, Eph. iv. 15; whilst Jesus himself compares it to the union subsisting between the branches and the vine.

<sup>4</sup> But none of these scripture images are used with propriety or truth, unless, by faith in the only begotten Son of God, be meant, heart-felt dependence on him, perpetually, for gracious influences, blessings, and salvation.

It is needless to add more scripture proof. But it is of the highest importance, that you examine yourself, where the stress of your dependence for the welfare of your soul rests? Where are you looking for pardon, strength, comfort, and sanctification? Is it to your own repentance, endeavours, prayers, and good qualities, or, through them all, to the exhaustless treasury God has provided for poor, guilty, helpless men, in the person of the Saviour? Blessed

are you, if you have a testimony in your conscience; that, lamenting your natural ignorance and blindness, you call upon the Lord to enlighten your mind, and to give you a distinct effectual perception of the great things which concern your everlasting peace. Blessed are you, if, feeling your utter inability to stand acquitted before God, by your reformation, duties, and prayers, you have no hope but in what Christ has done and suffered. Blessed are you, if, afflicted with the strength of your corruptions, and longing for more love to God and man, you depend upon Christ to work this divine change in your mind. This is to believe in the only begotten Son of God, without partiality and without hypocrisy. This is a dependence which the word of God declares shall never be confounded. The Giver of every good and perfect gift bestow it upon you, if you possess it not; and if you do, increase it still more abundantly.

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## PRAYER,

Suited to the preceding chapter on Faith in Christ.

**GLORY** be to Thee, O Lord and heavenly Father, for laying help upon one mighty to save, one chosen from amongst the people; and for commanding us to place our whole affiance in him.

But thou knowest, O Lord, our pride and unbelief; how unwilling we are to confess our sinfulness, or make application to him, who alone can deliver us. Give unto us grace to believe on the name of thy only begotten Son: to draw nigh to thee, depending only on his atoning death, and meritorious righteousness, as our whole safeguard from the wrath to come. Fill us with solid peace and lively hope

towards thee, though our faith. Though conscious of daily defilement in ourselves, and infinite purity in thee, may we have boldness to enter into the holiest, through the blood of Christ, and cry unto thee, *Abba*, Father.

May we know our need of instruction in righteousness; and in reading thy word, and in prayer, depend upon Christ, the wonderful Counsellor, to reveal to us, by his spirit, what is for our profit. Help us against our vain conceit of wisdom and understanding in ourselves, that we may draw nigh to Christ, to anoint us with eye-salve, Rev. iii. 18 that we may receive our sight, and be made wise unto salvation.

And, as thou, O Lord God, knowest all our weakness, and our enemies are open in thy sight, may our souls be stayed upon thee; assured that thou wilt come with a strong hand, and thy arm shall rule for thee. Instead of yielding to doubts and fears, (ever ready to assault us) may we cleave with full purpose of heart to our Head and Redeemer, and be strong in the Lord, and the power of his might; walking uprightly, working righteousness, and in all things adorning our profession.

We pray for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of thy Son, that his power, love, and all-sufficient mediation may be our chief joy, and richest treasure; that, when the trying hour of our dissolution draws nigh, and *natural life*, with all its comforts, is about to cease for ever, we may know in whom we have believed, and that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him, and to save us, for his own name and truth's sake, with an everlasting salvation.

We beg these blessings, O heavenly Father, in dependence upon our only Saviour, Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee, and the Holy Ghost, one God. Amen.

## SUNDAY XVII.

## CHAP. XVII.

The Foundation of Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**G**OD, who, in infinite grace, planned the method of salvation through Christ, has not only commanded us to believe in him, but, from the entrance of sin into our world, he began to reveal the glory of the Redeemer, on whom we are to trust.

This testimony is the rational, immutable foundation of Christian faith. And from this ample, infallible testimony which God hath given of his Son, I shall prove there is no part of our misery, as sinners, for which an all-sufficient remedy is not provided in the perfections which Jesus possesses, and the offices he executes.

Every man, it has been shown above, is chargeable with the sin of rebellion against his Maker. Consequently, every man stands exposed to the curse of God's violated law: and no sooner do we cease to dispute with him about the justice of his plainest declarations, than we confess ourselves guilty, and in danger of eternal ruin.

The first question, then, of utmost moment to be resolved, in this, What sufficient warrant has a sinner and a rebel, when he calls upon the name of Christ, to depend on his blood as a propitiation for sin, in the sight of God?

The answer returned by the divine record to this question, is sufficient to give strong consolation to the most guilty, who in earnest seek acceptance with their Maker: for the divine record displays the infinite majesty of Christ. "In the beginning, the

Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made," John i. 1—3. "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist," Col. i. 16, 17.

On account of this original glory, when the Redeemer came into our world to save that which was lost, though he was in appearance but a weeping babe, born in a stable, and lying in a manger, yet at that moment the Father said, "Let all the angels of God worship him." For though abased in this mysterious manner, he is God manifest in the flesh, the Creator of angels. He is Immanuel, God with us.

In this character, drawn by the Holy Ghost, behold the proper object of every ruined sinner's dependence. See with what reason you are commanded to confide in him, who, at the very time his appearance in the likeness of our sinful flesh was foretold, had his glory proclaimed by the prophetic herald in this magnificent style: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," Isa. ix.

Had the Lord of Hosts only declared, that one of such infinite majesty would be favorable in any degree to sinners, and plead for them with the Father, that they might be forgiven, this would have justified our dependence upon him. For a Redeemer, possessed of infinite perfections, must be a fit object of confidence to the soul humbled for sin, supposing he had been pleased to declare his merciful disposi-

tion towards it. But Christ has done much more than simply declare his good will to the children of men. The depth of his humiliation, and the pains of his death, are costly astonishing proofs of his love. And the same infallible record, which teaches us that the Redeemer is our God, assures us, that from zeal to manifest in the highest degree the divine wisdom, holiness, and grace, and from pity to a ruined world, he was content to live and die a substitute and surety for sinners.

In the fulness of time, according to that counsel of peace between the Father and Son, recorded in the fortieth psalm, the Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, was born into the world in the body prepared for him by the power of the Holy Ghost. But instead of the appearance which the carnal Jews wished him to assume, (a conqueror over all enemies to his nation) he was counted as no man. And though men in the lowest stations have generally the fewest troubles, his case was the reverse, the reverse of the grandeur of princes, and the tranquillity of the vulgar. Pre-eminence in the multitude and weight of his sorrows, and the very first place among the oppressed, was his only external distinction. Yet a man of low condition, in the midst of troubles, may have a high character, at least an untainted one; but Jesus made himself of no reputation; he bore that vile character before men, which man bore before his Maker, the horrid character of a blasphemer: nay, he stooped still lower, and not only stood as a criminal at the bar of Pilate, but appeared such by imputation in the eyes of God. "And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Malefactors are charged only with the crimes they have done, and with only a few of those. The scripture describes this unparalleled sufferer as oppressed with the innumerable and abominable crimes of multitudes,

like sands upon the sea-shore, and with all the sins of each individual in those multitudes. A weight much more terrible to sustain, than we are able to conceive; though we know this, that the curse of the law was a weight sufficient to crush a world: for when legions of angels, who excel in strength, abused that strength against the law, it sunk them from the highest heaven to the lowest hell.

Jesus undertook to bear this weight. "He was made sin," *i. e.* a sin-offering and a curse for us; he interposed his sacred body between the load of wrath from above, and us the heirs of wrath below. Instead of that high ineffable communion of love, which he maintained with his Father, he was content to feel the exquisite torture of being forsaken of him. It pleased the Lord to bruise him. And now he, "who was like a sheep dumb before his shearers," is dumb no longer. The Lamb of God, when brought to this most dreadful slaughter, opens his mouth, and pity itself must cry for pity. The impious language of his murderers, was, Where is now thy God? Behold, in the prodigious pangs of his soul, something like the same language comes from his own mouth: He cries out, My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me? Thus scripture delineates the Redeemer's humiliation; nor with less exactness ascertains the end for which he stooped thus low, and the everlasting benefits he thus secured to all his faithful dependants. Notwithstanding he paid so dearly for it, yet, in spite of all the opposition from the enemy of sinners, and from sinners themselves, he obtained a perfect conquest, dying with this word of transport in his mouth, *It is finished!* The debt of penal suffering, and of perfect obedience to the law, is paid; the powers of hell are vanquished, and God is well pleased.

Ponder this marvellous transaction, this horrible

torment and death, sustained by him who liveth for evermore. Consider deeply the ignominy of his abasement, and the extremity of his anguish, all endured with no other view, than to make atonement for sin, and purchase redemption for all who should ever trust in his name. Consider this fact, and then you may say, it is not possible for the most afflicted conscience to desire a surer foundation to trust in for pardon and acceptance with God. What can the law demand of you, either to exempt from suffering its penalty, or as a title to eternal life, which this vicarious obedience and sacrifice of God manifest in the flesh, has not abundantly provided in behalf of all true believers?

I will suppose your sins enormous, and crying with the loudest cry for vengeance: still, can they have so much weight to condemn you, who, in anguish for your offences, depend upon Jesus, as the blood of an incarnate God has, to cleanse you from all sin? Who dare say, your offences have dishonored God's law, so much as the obedience and death of the Redeemer has magnified it? or that those transgressions have not been fully expiated, for which the Lawgiver himself submitted to be put to death? Though you are shocked at the daring presumption of expecting pardon, on the vague notion of mere mercy, now your understanding is enlightened, and your conscience faithful in its rebukes; though you cannot give into the modish religion, which leaves the justice of the Most High, and the law of the Most Holy, destitute of their due honor; nor trust to obedience and future amendment, to atone for past offences; yet steadfastly fix your eyes on the matchless ransom paid by Jesus on the cross. See, there, the glory of the Holy God, reconciled with the salvation of criminals: see, there, the justice of God appear more awful than if mercy had been ex-

cluded; and mercy more amiable, than if justice had been given up. See how vengeance and forbearance there meet together; vengeance on the crucified Redeemer, and, for his sake, forbearance to all believing penitents. See, there, wrath and love kiss each other; wrath towards the divine Surety and Substitute, love to insolvent sinners. By this infinitely wise contrivance, every honor done to the criminals is an honor done to the law, because they receive it only through the satisfaction and obedience paid to it by their Surety: and all the respect put upon the law puts respect also upon the criminals, because he who undertook to pay their debt, and bear their curse, is God and man in one Christ.

Is not this transaction a solid ground of peace to the broken in heart? A transaction in which God holds forth his equal Son to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in "his blood, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus." What cloud so black can hang over the mind, which this truth is not able to dispel? It is designed to give light to them that sit in darkness, and the shadow of death, and to guide their feet into the way of peace.

Further, this ground for depending on the Lord Jesus Christ to obtain forgiveness, will be found still more adapted to our guilty state, when you know the way in which men become partakers of Christ. The *great* generally sell, even what they call their favors. Powerful recommendations, or long services, only induce them to give preferment. Far otherwise, as our impotent condition requires, is the case respecting our pardon from God. No works of righteousness are required to be *first* performed as a recommendation, no set of holy tempers, or stock of moral virtue. These are fruits which ever follow upon true belief in Christ, and from grace

received by constant dependence upon him. The invitation to sinners is expressed in the most encouraging terms. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, [no single valuable quality] yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." Isaiah lv. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;" the ungodly, sinners, enemies to God. Can a conscience, loaded with crimes of largest size, of deepest dye, and beyond number, conceive a refuge more adapted to its distressed condition? or more free promises of reconciliation and peace with God?

But should neither the divinity of the Redeemer, nor the merit of his sacrifice, nor his invitations to all who thirst for salvation, be sufficient to engage your entire dependence on him for pardon, there is still another ground for trusting in him, *his office*. Every high-priest, says the scripture, "taken from among men, is ordained for men:" all his influence and power is to be employed for their spiritual good. The things appointed for him to do strongly prove this; for he was to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin; sacrifices to make an atonement, and gifts, on account of which, it became God to continue his favor, though forfeited. The one grand indispensable qualification therefore for the office, was a heart, which knew how to have compassion on them that are ignorant, and out of the way of duty and safety.

But this office of high-priest, and its functions, we are infallibly taught, were *only* designed to serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things; *i. e.* to be a way of teaching us, by objects of sense, the office which the Lord Jesus Christ bears in the highest heavens, and what sinners are to expect from him. "He is made an high-priest of good things

to come. He is entered with his own blood into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us :” consequently is under the strongest engagements of office, to mediate effectually for all who shall ever come to God by him.

And lest we should fear we are too mean or vile to engage his most active pity, particular mention is made, that he is “touched with a feeling of our infirmities, having been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Therefore, from an experimental knowledge of all our difficulties, hardships, and distresses, he hath that exquisitely tender sympathy with us, which otherwise would not have been possible.

Is your spirit then wounded by sin? Listen not to your fears; parley not with the accuser; look to the intercessor for the transgressors. He must first prove false to the engagements of his most holy office, and do violence to the bowels of mercy, which constitute his fitness for it, before your humble dependence on his blood and intercession can be disappointed.

After all we have advanced, blessed be God, there remains yet another ground of confidence in the Saviour for remission of sins, to all who call on him, I mean repeated assurances from God, that the sacrifice of his Son is in his sight a complete atonement for their sins, who believe in the name of Christ, and shall save them for evermore. Declarations of this import are so many, that we can select only a few of the chief.

Isaiah, in his affecting account of this great event, having affirmed that Jesus suffered as a substitute for sinners, being wounded for our transgression, and bruised for our iniquity, thus magnificently describes the efficacy of his sufferings: “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his

knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities; bear them away," as the scapegoat did, carrying them into the pathless wilderness, no more to be found, though sought for by the malicious tempter and accuser.

The angel Gabriel is commissioned to revive the heart of Daniel, greatly beloved of God. For this purpose he assures him, that when Messiah the prince was cut off, he shall, in that oblation of himself on the cross, accomplish a work of infinite glory: "He shall finish transgression," by expiating it, and redeeming all from its curse who should believe in him. "He shall make an end of sin," by delivering (in virtue of his death) all from its detestable dominion, who shall call upon him. "He shall make reconciliation for iniquity," by a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction. "He shall bring in everlasting righteousness," a righteousness which will justify all who believe, throughout all ages, and with which everlasting life stands connected by the promise of God. After the testimony of a prophet, and an angel, hear the voice of God from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." His life and death magnifies my law, redeems sinners from its curse, and is of all things on earth, or in heaven, incomparably the noblest in my eyes. The Redeemer himself bears the same strong attestation to the efficacy of his death, as the salvation of his church. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. My flesh I give for the life of the world.—This is my blood of the New Testament, shed for the remission of the sins of many." Weigh well these decisive testimonies. They will constrain you to say, nothing more could have been done to take away every objection a guilty wounded spirit

can make against its obtaining forgiveness. With equal propriety and mercy is this call addressed to perishing sinners: "Come unto ME, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." My body bore your sins on the tree, when I suffered, the just for the unjust; my blood was shed to cleanse you. I, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, who uphold all things by the word of my power, purged away sin by the sacrifice of myself, and am set down a mediator on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Believe, therefore, on me, and you shall receive remission of sins, and never perish.

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## SUNDAY XVIII.

### CHAP. XVIII.

The same Subject continued.

**WE** have proved the exceeding abundant grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to save from the guilt of sin. We are now to shew what foundation there is to depend upon him for knowledge, strength, and everlasting salvation.

As man's first disobedience sprung from his impious desire to be as the gods in knowledge, the righteous punishment of his sin was, extinction of light in his soul. Hence we are born blind to God, and the things of God, though the knowledge of them be far more desirable than life itself. Hence we are in perpetual danger of delusion, and, by our lusts, prejudiced strongly against the truth.

In these circumstances, God is pleased graciously

to command us to depend on the Lord Jesus Christ, to recover our sight, and enrich us with spiritual knowledge. To prove the reasonableness of this dependence, the Father declares, he hath given Christ for a light to the Gentiles ; to open the blind eyes, Isa. xlii.

Malachi calls him the Sun of Righteousness ; for as the sun in the firmament dispenses invigorating influence through the whole earth, unveils the face of every object in the visible creation, and gives it to be seen in its true situation ; so the Redeemer, by his word and spirit, scatters darkness from the mind, makes divine truth visible, and strengthens our dim faculties to behold the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. Zacharias, full of the Holy Ghost, celebrates the appearance of Christ as an effectual teacher of men in things of the utmost moment, which the use and exercise of their own rational faculties could never have discovered. He calls Jesus the day-spring from on high, rising through the tender mercy of our God, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide their feet in the way of peace. The Baptist points him out as the person from whom all the divine knowledge proceeds, which ever was or will be amongst men. This is the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

The Redeemer himself confirms these high testimonies, when the Jews attempted to ensnare him by their subtle and captious questions. He said unto them, "I am the light of the world : " what possibility then is there of deceiving me, or deluding, by your falsehoods, my disciples ? " He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." How could he more strongly assert, that he came to make the way from earth to heaven plain before sinners.

St. Paul, inspired by the Holy Ghost, teaches the church, that Christ is made of God, unto all who believe, wisdom ; and that God, “ who caused the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid :” covered under the veil of humanity, and the depth of his humiliation. Observe the strong import of his expression ; the apostle does not say *treasure* in the singular number, though this implies excellency and abundance of knowledge, but *treasures*. He doth not only say *treasures*, though this would have greatly enlarged our conceptions ; but he saith, in whom *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid. So that nothing pertaining to spiritual life and godliness can be imagined, no knowledge in the least degree profitable to poor, weak, helpless, sinful creatures, which is not to be found in Christ, as in an inexhaustible magazine, provided by the God of glory for the supply of our necessities.

In this emphatical manner do the scriptures exalt Christ, in his prophetic office, as appearing to make a complete revelation of the name of God, his will and designs concerning us ; and after having delivered, as the prophets before him, the words of pure truth, he was not, as they, impotent to impress effectually what they taught. This prophet of all ages and nations declares, “ I will send unto you another Comforter, even the spirit of truth, he shall lead you into all truth.”

Do you then feel your ignorance in religion, and bewail the dulness in your understanding to apprehend spiritual things, and a weariness when your attention is turned to them ? Are you grieved to find so much obscurity rest upon the book of God, when it is before you ? Behold your relief. The

scripture exhorts you to depend upon Christ, to give you all the knowledge you need. What can induce you to make application to him, if not the declaration, that he left the bosom of the Father to declare *him*? What can encourage our utmost confidence of success, if the manner in which his Church publishes their success fails? "The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." He hath given us not only our intellect, which distinguishes us from the world of animals, for this was ever common to all men; he hath given us not only the revealed word, which deluded pretenders have as well as we; but he hath given us, say the faithful in Christ, the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of himself, the truth. They who bear this testimony were once as ignorant and dark as you can be. When blind Bartimeous cried out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me, that I may receive my sight," they that stood by said, "Be of good comfort, rise, he calleth thee." But the same compassionate Saviour addresses thee, thou child of ignorance, from his glorious high throne, in terms no less kind: "I counsel thee to buy of me eye-salve, that thou mayst see;" have the knowledge of God, and a right judgment in all things. Light, not only to see the way of life, but to discover and baffle the devices of the enemy: for before Christ all things are naked, even the deepest counsels of the destroyer, and all his cruel snares. He knows how, with equal ease and certainty, to confound his force, and infatuate the author of all subtlety and malice. He came to ruin all his contrivances against the faithful, according to the name of glory first given him, Bruiser of the Serpent's Head. How worthy then is this matchless person to be trusted with unshaken confidence for our instructor and guide all our days, to

deliver the godly out of every temptation and preserve them safe unto his own kingdom !



## SUNDAY XIX.

### CHAP. XIX.

The Ground for Faith in Christ to turn us from all Iniquity.

**NATURALLY** blind, we are also slaves to an earthly, sensual, devilish spirit. This sad truth is often felt in remorse, shame, loss, and many inconveniences. Then we wish ourselves free ; and, confident in our own strength, determine no more to yield. But the very next temptation adapted to our beloved lust prevails as easily as did the former ; so that, soon disheartened by repeated foils, we give up the all-important contest, we begin to palliate and excuse the ignominious slavery, which we find no heart to shake off.

This is the state of man. And, take notice, experience concurs with scripture to prove, that no share of good sense, or superior learning, or good education, give men power to resist their corrupt nature, any more than savage ignorance. The most these advantages can do, is only to gild those shackles they can never break, and slightly conceal from the superficial eye of a fellow-creature what still galls and defiles the inner man.

This subjection to sin is grievous to a soul born again, as the infamy of vassalage to a free citizen. Enlightened to judge aright, you will long to have your iniquities subdued ; and, without strength in

yourself. you will gladly implore deliverance from such tyrannical oppression. In sure and certain hope of this deliverance, God commands you to depend on the Lord Jesus Christ. To justify your dependence, a display is given of his power, such as makes the slightest suspicion of miscarriage unreasonable to the last degree. For the ancient prophets, describing his majesty, call him, "The Lord of Hosts. the Lord mighty in battle, who has the earth for his footstool, and heaven for his throne; the light for his garment; the clouds for his chariot; the thunder for his voice; and all the legions of angels for his servants.

And, lest his deep abasement of himself should weaken our idea of his mighty power to save, we have a very particular relation of the wonders wrought by him in the days of his flesh. Innumerable multitudes of diseased and impotent people were brought to his feet, and by his word instantly made whole, every one of them. The dumb and deaf, the blind and dead, his energy restored to the blessing of life, or the full exercise of all their faculties and powers. The whole creation he commanded with absolute sway. Though winds and storms are mighty, yet Jesus of Nazareth rebukes them, and they are hushed into silence. The waves of the sea rage horrible, yet sink at his word into a perfect calm. Death and the grave, to mortals inexorable, cannot one moment detain their prey, when Jesus saith, "Lazarus, arise." The powers of darkness, though more mighty than diseases, storms, and death, crouch before him, and adore him as their Lord.

Further, to encourage sinners to confide in him as a deliverer from the tyranny of sin, Jesus, when on earth, carried about with him many monuments of his saving power. Publicans, the worst of men,

harlots, the most infamous of women, he separated from their inveterate lusts, giving proof, in each of these instances, that no one can be so enslaved to sin and Satan, but he can make them free indeed. After preaching this transporting truth with his own lips, and confirming it day by day during his ministry, he displays his power to the height at the very hour of his death. Behold him hanging on the cross, his visage frightfully blotted and mangled, his whole body covered with marks of scorn, swelled with strokes of violence, bedewed from head to foot with his own blood! Is he a deliverer from sin? Can he save? Hearken, though thus low himself, his power and grace destroy in a moment the dominion of sin and Satan, in the utmost strength we can possibly conceive it. He says to the dying malefactor, who turned to him with the prayer of faith, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise." I will carry thee up with me into heaven, as a trophy of my victory over Satan, and will show thee there as part of the spoils which shall adorn my triumph over hell. He snatches this abandoned wretch as a brand out of the fire, an earnest of the everlasting salvation of all who should ever call upon him. He snatches from the very jaws of hell one who seemed not only void of grace, but past it; and in an instant sanctifies that heart, which had been for many years the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

In this conquest, the Redeemer acted with a double view, to prove himself the Messiah; and gave an indisputable warrant for sinners, even the chief, to call upon him, that they may be saved.

Should it be said, the Redeemer's death and burial indicate his weakness, Christians reply, he lay in the

grave, not as a subject, but as a conqueror; he came there to draw out the sting from the king of terrors; and on the third day from his death, triumph as the resurrection and the life, in whom whosoever liveth and believeth shall never die. The language of his resurrection was full of power: it spoke again, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Isaiah xxvi.

These ample testimonies of decisive authority prove the power of Jesus, and present him before our eyes as a fit object of unreserved dependence for deliverance from the power of sin. And they are still corroborated by declarations both in the Old and New Testament. Hear how every doubt is answered, and all desponding thoughts reprov'd.

"Say to them that are of a fearful heart, [under a lively view of their own weakness, sins, and corruption] Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence, he will come and save you," Isaiah xxxv. "Behold! the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work is before him; he shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth," Isaiah xl, and xlii.

Confident of the certainty of these declarations, St. Peter addresses the Jews, though a people abandoned to all wickedness, and tells them, that "God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless them, by turning every one of them, who shall call upon his name, from their iniquities.

See how magnificently St. Paul describes the exceeding greatness of Christ's power to save from

sin and hell. "God [saith he] hath raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all," Eph. i. 20—23.

Magnify then, as you please, the number or strength of temptations; the weakness or corruption of our nature; the power of Satan, and of evil habits; still, what are all these before him, who gave himself to redeem men from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works? What before him, whose office, as king in Zion, is to turn from darkness unto light, from the power of Satan unto God, and enrich the fallen soul with that holiness which shall make it meet for heaven? What are these usurpers, avarice, lewdness, envy, malice, or unbelief, by whom strengthened, that they should be too hard for him utterly to subdue, from whose fulness all the saints who ever lived on earth received their every excellency, and all the angels their spotless purity? Was it possible to prove that one single persevering dependant on the power and grace of Christ ever died in sin, how could the promises of God concerning his Son be true, or he answer the character given of him? Either he must be falsely described in scripture, or this conclusion be infallible: "if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." All your evil tempers shall be subdued, and you be preserved blameless in spirit, soul, and body.

So able is Christ to save. I proceed to prove he is as ready and willing, by evidence the most decisive. What means his humiliation from first to

last? His pleading with sinners all the day, and his midnight intercessions for them? What mean his invitations? "Ho, every one that thirsteth, let him come unto me, and drink. Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out:" What was it, but love, in the highest degree, which made him so long endure a condition in all respects the reverse of his original glory? Instead of hallelujahs from the angelic host, blasphemous revilings from the children of the devil; instead of joy inconceivable, an heart in the midst of his body like melting wax, through the intenseness of his anguish; instead of adoration from myriads of ministering spirits, buffetings, bloody scourges on his back, and on his face a load of spittle; instead of his throne high and lifted up, before which the whole host of heaven cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: heaven and earth is full of thy glory!" a cross between two thieves, in the midst of insulting shouts, and the frowns of eternal justice.

Come hither, behold and see if there was ever love like this. Come, and hear his voice in the height of all his sufferings: looking upon his murderers, when his eyes were about to close in death, he cried, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Now then, if you can, doubt. Now, if it be possible, question *his willingness* to save poor sinners, turning to them with the prayer of faith, who prayed even for his bitterest foes.

In the last place, the Lord Jesus Christ is as proper a person to trust for eternal salvation, as for wisdom, strength, and righteousness in this life. His dominion reaches equally over the world in which we dwell, and that into which death translates us.

- "Fear not," saith the Saviour, "I am the first and the last, I am he that liveth, and was dead, and

behold I am alive for ever more, and have the keys of hell and the grave. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also." And in his last solemn prayer for all who should ever believe in him, he declares his infinite love, and their eternal salvation. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."

After a constant exercise, therefore, of dependence on Christ to save from the guilt, defilement, and power of sin, from ignorance, temptation, and every enemy which can assault us in the way, what well-grounded comfort, what abounding hope in death, is his name, and faith in his name, able to inspire! Able to make us die in triumph, no less than live in righteousness; to copy the pattern of the first martyr in the Christian church, to behold by faith what he saw without a veil, and expire in peace and joy, saying "Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commend my spirit."



## PRAAYER,

Suited to the preceding Subject.

○ LORD JESUS CHRIST, display, we entreat thee, the glory of thy name, that we may exult and extol, and honor thee, even as we honor the Father. Enlighten the eyes of our understanding, that we may know thou hast fulfilled all righteousness, magnified the law, and made it honorable; finished transgression by thy death on the cross, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting right-

cousness. Take away all unbelief, that thy blood and righteousness may be our shield against all the fiery darts of the wicked one, and a covert from the tempest of divine wrath due to our sins. So shall our hearts be set at liberty from all fear that hath torment, and we shall run the way of thy commandments.

Give us grace, O good Lord, to be strong in thy power and might, against all the enemies of our souls. Assure our hearts against all suggestions to the contrary, that thou art able and faithful, and wilt subdue our iniquities, who call upon thee, and keep us unblameable and unproveable. Deliver us from a self-sufficient spirit, that we may never attempt to perform duty, resist temptation, or bear the cross in our own strength. Let us know and feel, that when we are weak, then are we strong; and that when we depend only on thy arm and favor towards us, neither the flesh, the world, nor Satan, shall be able to prevail against us.

Give us full assurance of understanding and faith in the great mystery of godliness, that thou art God and man in one Christ, infinite in wisdom to teach; in power to help and defend; in justice to destroy thy adversaries; infinite in goodness to supply all our wants, and complete our felicity; infinite in truth to accomplish all thy exceeding great and precious promises, and altogether such a Saviour as our deep and manifold necessities require.

Finally, we beseech thee, O Lord, to grant that we may have in ourselves the witness of thy power and glory, by the change wrought and maintained in our views, pursuits, and tempers; that we may shew forth thy praises, who hast called us out of darkness into marvellous light, and be ready, when we depart, to join the song of the ransomed of the Lord, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive

power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and honor, and blessing. Blessing, honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." Amen.

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## SUNDAY XX.

### CHAP. XX.

On the Divinity of the Holy Ghost.

**T**HE scripture teaches us, that the work of man's salvation is through the joint agency of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. God the Father, in infinite wisdom and mercy, provided himself a lamb for a burnt-offering to purge away sin. God the Son, in his own person, as mediator, submits to suffer the just for the unjust, rising for their justification, and ever living to make intercession for all who come to God by him. God the Holy Ghost gives knowledge and understanding of this glorious salvation, procures it a cordial reception, and sanctifies the soul for endless bliss.

Each of these persons, who thus co-operate in man's salvation, must be by nature God, because nothing finite can execute any part of this grand scheme. Who, but the supreme Lawgiver, can admit of a substitute to bear the curse due to sinners? What creature can possibly have merit, much less be sufficient, by his own obedience and death, to atone for offences against the majesty of Heaven? Or to whom but God doth the power appertain, greater than that of creation, to bring

man's will, obstinately fixed in rebellion against his Maker, to be in all things gladly obedient to his command?

But if the scripture teaches that the salvation of man is owing to the agency of each person in the blessed Trinity, it is then no speculative notion, but a doctrine of substantial and perpetual use, worthy the most devout attention of every Christian, to impress his mind, by earnest meditation, with what God has revealed touching this subject : revealed not at all to teach us how the Father, Son, and Spirit, are three persons in one eternal Godhead (for this it never attempts). but that we may know our obligations to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and live in such entire confidence in the mercy of God, and such devotedness to his service, as the knowledge of this most sublime and mysterious truth is designed to produce.

The scripture character of God the Father has already been delineated ; and that of God the Son in his mediatorial office. We shall now lay before you, at one view, what we are taught of the nature, person, and office of the Holy Ghost. May he, the Spirit of truth, give us to understand the things which belong to his glory !

That he is one in essence with the Father and Son, the scripture proves in this plain manner. It ascribes to him the perfections of God. Now the distinct nature of every thing is determined by its properties. He who possesses the properties peculiar to a man, is on that very account esteemed one : by consequence, he who possesses the perfections peculiar to God, must on that account be worshipped as God.

But the scriptures teach us, that the Holy Ghost is an eternal, infinite, almighty Being, and called, in exclusion of all creatures, the Holy Spirit. The

blood of Jesus, we are assured, was offered under his influence, under the name of the Eternal Spirit, Heb. ch. ix. A title given only to God: for we nowhere read of an eternal angel. The Holy Ghost is infinite, for he searcheth all things, even the deep things of God, 1 Cor. ii. He is almighty, he formed the chaos into order and beauty, and by his energy the world subsists each day. "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth," Psal. civ.

His almighty power is no less conspicuous in the dispensations of grace, than in the sphere of nature. The spotless humanity of Jesus was formed by his power in the blessed virgin; by him Jesus was led into the wilderness; anointed to preach the gospel, and fulfil his ministry; "Anointed with the oil of gladness, above all kings, and priests, and prophets, who were typical of his glory." In all that Jesus did on earth, he was supported, we are expressly taught, by the Holy Ghost. A most forcible proof of his divinity; for Jesus, as Mediator, has a name given which is above every name, to so high a degree, that all in earth and heaven must bow their knee to him; yet consider as Mediator, he is still inferior to the Holy Ghost, because by him consecrated and enabled to discharge that very office. But nothing in earth or heaven, except God, is above the man Christ Jesus; the Holy Ghost must then be one in essence with the Father, as the scripture teaches, and the church of Christ has ever believed.

Again, the Holy Ghost does works proper to God. He renews the soul. When those sinners at Corinth, sunk into the lowest dregs of wickedness, became new creatures, the glorious transformation is ascribed to this divine agent. Such were some of you (whoremongers, adulterers, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous); but ye are

washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Cor. vi.

Further, the Holy Ghost endued the apostles with miraculous powers, laid the foundation of the Christian church, published its laws, and governed all things. He separated Paul and Barnabas, and appointed their mission to one rather than another place, the high prerogative of the supreme Director. A dispensation of infinite consequence, and incommunicable to a creature.

In the consummation of all things, the Holy Ghost will work in a manner altogether divine, the master-piece of all he has done, a demonstration of his providence and grace, in a degree which can belong to none but God. He will raise the bodies of the faithful from the dust, and clothe them with immortal glory. "If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit which dwelleth in you," Rom. viii.

Further, the Holy Ghost must be one in essence with the Father and the Son, because divine worship is paid to him. This glory, which the jealous God will not give to another, consists in swearing by him, touching the truth of what we affirm; according to that command, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and swear by his name. It consists also in making him the only object of our faith and trust. Thus saith the Lord, "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm," Jer. xvii. This one only fountain of benediction and grace is to be implored for the continuance of both, and obeyed as the only one whom we are to fear. The principal end of divine worship is in this manner to ascribe unto God the honor due to his

name. But we find in scripture all these particular acts of supreme worship paid to the Holy Ghost. St. Paul swears by him, and appeals to him as witness of his sincere good-will to his enraged brethren the Jews. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost." We are required to believe in the Holy Ghost, and to obey him with the father and the Son: for the import of our baptism in each of their names is, that we entirely surrender ourselves unto the service of the sacred Trinity. He also is implored with the Father and the Son, as the fountain of all blessings and graces of the Gospel. From the days of the apostles, the church of Christ has concluded her public worship with this address to the Trinity (which were blasphemous, if they were not equally divine), "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

The infinite glory also given to God, and the self-abasement of men and angels, under a sense of his appearance, are ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Isaiah relates his vision of the glory of God: the prophet saw the "Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims, each one had six wings. With twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. Then said I, Wo is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips," Isa. vi. By comparing this scripture with the quotations of it in the New Testament, there is full evidence that this adoration was paid to the Holy Trinity. As to God the Father, none dispute that worship was addressed to him. With respect to Christ, we are infallibly

assured, that Isaiah spoke these things, when he saw his glory. And St. Paul expressly asserts, that the voice of the Lord, which at this very time spake to Isaiah, was the Holy Spirit himself. "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand," Acts ii. 8.

Again, the Spirit is exalted above the rank of creatures, therefore he must be God: for there is no middle state between. That he is exalted above the rank of creatures is evident, because he is never represented as a worshipper of God. But the relation of all creatures to him, and their dependence upon him, are necessary obligations to pay him worship. And the more excellent the endowments of a creature are, the stronger will be his obligation to glorify his Maker. Accordingly, the scripture frequently represents the whole company of heaven offering up to God their most ardent praises. But how comes it, if the Spirit be also a creature, that he is never mentioned as a worshipper? Is it not strange indeed that he should be forgotten, who, if a creature, should, as the principal person, have led this concert of praise? Was it not highly needful to have made mention of him, in order to prevent our mistaking in a matter of such moment? The total silence, therefore, of scripture on this head affords a strong inference that the prophets, apostles, and Christ, knew the Holy Ghost was not a creature, but by nature God.

It was foreseen that many profane disputers would affirm the Spirit is no more than a quality in God, which cannot subsist, or be distinguished as a person. To confute this notion, he has a name significant of his essence and energy; that his essence is spiritual, and his energy the cause of all holiness in the souls of men. As the spirit within a man, which observes

his own thoughts, is not a quality, but something really distinct from his thoughts; so this Spirit, which knows the thoughts of God, and even searches the deep things of God, must be a person distinct from the Father, who is thus known by him. Besides, all personal actions are ascribed to the Spirit: "He shall not speak of himself; but what he has heard, that shall he speak." He convinces the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. And when Peter was still doubtful of the import of the heavenly vision, "The Spirit said unto him, behold three men seek thee." All these expressions are without a meaning, if they do not clearly mark the personality of the Holy Ghost.

From this summary view it appears, that the Holy Ghost possesses the essential attributes of God, that he does works proper to God, and receives the honor due unto God only. To this scripture proof there is no reply, but such as infidelity is never at a loss to make against the plainest truths. These scripture proofs, which have been often urged at large with great strength and clearness, are a sufficient warrant for our faith in this important article of the Christian creed. As to those who will contradict and blaspheme on account of insuperable difficulties which occur in this subject, the moment we presume to step beyond what is written, it must be observed that all the peculiar doctrines of revelation, no less than this, become to such, first matter of dispute, and then are rejected, because they seem irrational, till at length God's blessed system of truth, which none of the wise men of this world knew, is reduced to little more than some moral maxims, and the revelation of a resurrection of the just and unjust. Whether this be to receive and rationally interpret the book of God with all reverence, or to renounce all subjection to its authority, and sit in judgment upon his dictates, judge ye!

## SUNDAY XXI.

## CHAP. XXI.

## On the Operations of the Holy Ghost.

**AFTER** our judgment is fully informed and convinced of the divinity of the Holy Ghost, we must know for what great purposes that infinite, almighty, eternal Spirit, exercises his office in the church of Christ, and what are his influences; for till these things are clearly understood, we can never ascribe to him the glory of his own work, nor be secure from dangerous delusions. But the scripture is not more full in declaring the divinity of the Holy Ghost, than in determining the nature and invariable effects of his operation.

To him, we are taught by holy writ, is intrusted the management of Christ's cause against a rebel world. By his secret, yet mighty energy, the foundation of the Christian religion is *laid* in the soul; by him it is maintained, and at length produces much fruit to perfection. The foundation of the Christian religion, as the words import, is the knowledge of Christ; without which, though you may do many things which are commanded, and be in profession a Christian, you still want the foundation of acceptable worship, according to that assertion, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor," John xii. *i. e.* he will honor no one else.

But if you consider the scripture account of the condition the world was in, when the name of Christ was *first* preached, or the natural blindness of the human mind to the truths of God in all ages, you will readily acknowledge, that wherever the glory of

the Lord is perceived, it must be owing to the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Few possibly doubt of this, at the time when Christ was first preached. For then to conceive justly of him, was directly contrary to the whole force of inveterate prejudice, corrupt education, and worldly interest. Suppose yourself an inhabitant either of Jerusalem, or Rome, at the time when the gospel was published in those cities. Pharisæism and Sadducism reigned throughout Jerusalem and Judea; and the impurest idolatry, with the most enormous sensuality of every kind, triumphed amongst the heathens. In this situation, suppose you had heard an apostle, in the name of God, command you to confess your sinfulness, and, as a wretch for ever undone (but for this refuge from deserved wrath) to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; that this apostle, instead of concealing the meanness and weakness in which Jesus Christ lived, the shame and torture in which he died, told you, that on his cross he made atonement for sin, purchased sinners with the price of his blood, that they might live in subjection to him as their Sovereign; that he possessed power irresistible, to save, reward, and eternally enrich his friends, or to confound, conquer, and punish his adversaries: suppose the apostle to conclude this address with a most solemn assertion, that if you refused the call now given to you, and died without pardon from Christ, you must feel the wrath to come: Instantly upon such an address, in the circumstances above described, your heart tells you, you would reject the messenger and his call with equal disdain and hatred. For the life of Jesus, infamous through innumerable slanders of the vilest sort, and his death ignominious in your apprehension to the last degree, must make you treat the report of salvation by him alone, as the most palpable lie ever forged to deceive.

Accustomed from a child either to worship false gods, or the true one, without any affiance in a Mediator, a sacred horror must chill your blood, upon hearing your idols degraded, and the worship of them declared worthy of damnation. Or if a Jew, you would be ready to rend your garments on hearing Jesus, who was a man, declared to be one with God; whilst every passion for sinful pleasure, love of praise, fear of reproach, or desire of happiness in the world, must inflame your rage against a religion, which was such an enemy to them all. What, is the light of reason to pierce through such a cloud of error and prejudice? What, the force of moral suasion, or the resolution of man to make at once a sacrifice of friends, relations, reputation, and even be deemed by those, to whom you was before most dear, a curse to your country \*? Yet nothing less was a certain consequence before the eyes of all, who dared to join themselves to the Lord Jesus; that Jesus, who, from the odium cast upon his name by the Jews in every place, is marked as the man "whom the nation abhorreth."

To vanquish such deep-rooted prejudice and enmity against the Redeemer, the gospel is to be preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Thus furnished, the apostles were to be witnesses for Jesus, and the redemption he finished, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. This almighty Agent, by his miraculous gifts in rich variety imparted to them, bore down the prejudices of education, the

\* The unlearned reader is to be informed, that the first defenders of our Holy Faith all take notice of the cruel charges brought against Christians, as the cause of all the public calamities among the Pagans, whose gods they abhorred. The Pagans, therefore, inflamed with superstition, thought they pleased their gods by putting them to death.

fear of reproach and death, and all base self-love. This almighty Agent, by his gracious influence on the mind (at the time he was appealing by wonderful signs to their senses), made the glory of the Lord appear with such transcendent excellency, that thousands were in every place added to the church, who loved their Saviour better than their lives.

Thus, in a visible and grand display of power, the Holy Ghost fulfilled the Redeemer's promise, and laid the foundation of faith in his name. In this manner, "He testified of Jesus, and glorified him." He reprov'd the world of sin, in their contemptuous rejection of Christ; of righteousness in his cause and person. He convinced the world of judgment, in opening their eyes to see the throne of Satan overturned, his oracles silenced, his temples deserted, abhorred, and miserable captives under his yoke set at liberty without number; for whilst the Holy Ghost, in the judgment of all who would consider, wrought mightily for the gospel, he enlightened the understanding by a subsequent internal influence.

This is evident from the apostle's prayer for the church at Ephesus. By the miracles they had seen, they were convinced of the divine authority of the gospel. They adored its much despised and blasphemed Author. Nevertheless, the apostle clearly distinguishes this conviction flowing from external evidence, from the internal gracious influence of the Holy Ghost. He prays unto God to grant them his spirit, that "the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know what was the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of his power towards us that believe."

This goes much deeper than the force of miracles could reach. This implies a *transforming* knowledge of those sublime truths, which miracles alone

can never produce, and a happy experience of the certainty of the words of truth, from their vital operation within.

From this plain and true account of the state of Christ's church at the beginning, it is clear, that the Holy Ghost must then lay the foundation of faith in Christ in each individual, who believed to the saving of his soul.

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## SUNDAY XXII.

### CHAP. XXII.

On the constant Agency of the Holy Ghost in all Ages.

**HIS** miraculous gifts are allowed, by all who receive the Bible, to have been displayed in the first ages of the church. But his divine influences on the heart *now* are called in question by many professing Christians. They allege that our circumstances totally differ from the state of the primitive believers. Now instead of blasphemous revilings cast on the name of Jesus, he is constantly adored as God in the public service of our church. Instead of bitter prejudices from education against his death as a sacrifice for sin, we are baptized into it, as our redemption, and generally hear it spoken of with reverence. Instead of persecution from friends and relations, enraged for our professing Christianity, we should give offence by not doing so.

From this great change of circumstances, as great a difference has followed in the work of the Holy Ghost.

We see not one miracle wrought in confirmation,

of the gospel now : its own establishment, the most astonishing of all miracles, appeals to every man. The extraordinary operations of the Holy Ghost thus ceasing, many make a very false and dangerous conclusion, injuriously restraining to the apostolic times, the teaching, strength, and consolations communicated by the Spirit to all the faithful. A mistake, destructive of vital religion, and proceeding from gross ignorance of man's natural blindness and depravity of heart. For if we are to credit the account given of both in scripture, it is certain no man left to himself would ever embrace the truth of God, though the rage of Jews and Gentiles be removed, and the Bible granted to be a revelation from Heaven. *The natural man*, acting only upon principles which he concludes to be rational, and seeking no illumination from God, "receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Their truth and excellency is only discoverable by the teaching of the Spirit. From this declaration it necessarily follows, that all profitable knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, must proceed from the Holy Ghost at this day, no less than when the apostles first planted churches in the name of Christ. He must take of the things which are Christ's, and shew them unto men. And what was his work immediately after our Lord's ascension, is still so in every one who believes to the saving of his soul, the gift of miraculous powers only excepted. The proof of this assertion, now so much questioned, nay, often vilified as despicable enthusiasm, I shall endeavour to evince from the same instructive declaration in holy writ, which has been already considered in relation to the apostolic age.

"When the Comforter is come, he will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not in me."

Crimes destructive or injurious to society, are scandalous, and resented by all as very evil. But the grand provoking offence of thinking so well of ourselves, and so highly of our own virtues, as renders all honor we give unto Christ in the creed, and worship of the church, merely verbal, this offence you never see in the catalogue of faults, which unenlightened men confess chargeable upon themselves. Impure and wicked as we are, we can dare to approach the holy jealous God in prayer, without having recourse to a Mediator, or feeling, in any degree, that we need the atonement he has made.

To expose *this sin* in all its malignity, is the work of the Holy Ghost. He must open your eyes (if they be ever opened) to see your own vileness. He must convince you what mean and low thoughts you entertained of the Redeemer, and your base neglect of him, though every name, and office, and glory, that can magnify, exalt, and endear him to mankind, is constantly given him in the oracles of God. The Holy Ghost also can alone enable you to say, with knowledge and certainty, Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. And, by his influence only, you can believe in your heart, and boldly make confession with your mouth, that if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he is *anathema mar-anatha*, accursed of God; and, without a divine change, sure to be destroyed by the Lord when he cometh to judge the world. Thus, clearly to see the glory of Christ, and heartily to detest the neglect and dishonor shewn to his person and his works, is a grace bestowed by the Spirit of truth, by whom men are led into this necessary and most valuable knowledge of Christ.

Again, "when the Comforter is come," saith our Lord, "he shall reprove the world of righteousness,

because I go to my Father, and the world seeth me no more."

To confess we are received into the favor of God by virtue of what another hath done, and that the efficacy of the life and death of Christ derives pardon and everlasting salvation on all his faithful people, is a rock of offence to our haughty spirit, and a palpable absurdity to men, who trust in *themselves as righteous*. And though we profess (having always been taught to do so) reverence for the word of God, still, if left to ourselves, we make personal worth and moral character our foundation of acceptance with our Judge. Under accusations of conscience we fly to human frailty, and the strength of temptation, as our advocates; or to repentance and amendment, as our propitiation. So obstinately (through our corrupt nature) are we prepossessed in favor of our virtues, that we can talk, and trust too, as if we were as good as the law of God requires we should be, to enter into life by our own righteousness.

It is the work of the Holy Ghost to reprove the world for this self-exalting lie; this hateful overrating our tainted and much blemished obedience. He overturns all vain confidence, by establishing the mind in the full knowledge of Christ delivered for our offences, raised again for our justification, appearing in the presence of God with his own blood. From whence the conclusion is irresistible, that even the holiest members of the Christian church, are accepted, not for their own, but Christ's sake; that his going to the Father as Mediator is all our hope, and his name, the Lord our righteousness, our only ground of confidence that God will be favorable unto us, and not remember our sins; that though repentance, love to God, and obedience without reserve, must vouch our relation to Christ, yet neither

singly or united do they cover our transgressions, or obtain for us eternal life; for this we stand indebted to the blood and righteousness of God our Saviour.

But till the Holy Ghost has convinced us of our absolute need of imputed divine righteousness, it is one of the most offensive articles of the Christian's creed. Piqued at the low account this makes of the best virtues in the best of men, we shall clamour against exalting so highly the Saviour's obedience and death, as a disparagement of personal holiness; and the gift of justification unto eternal life, through the redemption that is in Jesus, will be deemed a contempt of good works. To remove this natural blindness and stubborn prejudice, the Spirit of truth must exert his kindly influence: and then what Christ has done, suffered, and pleads before the Father, will be all our salvation, and all our desire.

In one instance more, the text under consideration declares the perpetual agency of the Holy Ghost. "He shall reprove the world of judgment," because the prince of this world is judged; *i. e.* convince men of the complete victory obtained by Christ over Satan, in order to make all believers in his name more than conquerors too.

Subjection to sin, though the vilest slavery on earth (so very low has man fallen), is earnestly maintained to be unavoidable. Every one (it is said in all companies) has his foible: which, in polite language, means some detestable lust, or intolerable temper, which lords it over him. Unwilling to be set free, we magnify the force of temptation, and our own infirmities, keeping out of sight the mighty Redeemer, and then say, "Who can stand before all these?"

The Holy Ghost, that grand agent for the glory of Christ, convinces us (if we are ever convinced),

that we greatly err in this matter, since the prince of this world, Satan, *is judged*, already dethroned and vanquished by the Saviour, who is infinitely stronger in them who believe, than the combined force of all outward opposition, or inward corruptions. Thus it is plain to demonstration, if pride, or passion, or discontent, if intemperance or lewdness, covetousness or envy, or any evil temper whatever, hold the mastery over us, it is because sin is neither exceedingly sinful in our eyes, nor grievous to bear; therefore we refuse to cry out for deliverance. Like infamous wretches, who prefer rags and sores, with idleness and beggary, to honest labour, "we will not be made whole."

For this purpose, *now perpetually*, as in the apostles' days, is the agency of the Holy Ghost experienced by every one who believeth in Jesus. And now, as then, a man cannot enter into the kingdom of God, except he be born of water, and of the Spirit.

But the agency of the Holy Ghost, when he testifies of Christ, and glorifies him, is quite distinct from the means which convey the testimony. This important distinction is carefully noted in scripture. Thus it is written of the apostate Jews, "Hear ye indeed, but perceive not, make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed." Here, observe well, is the call of the word, yet a refusal of grace to make it effectual, on account of their insufferable provocations. The alarming expressions, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes," cannot possibly mean that God inspired Israel with contempt for his holy word, or disaffection to it; but they mean, that disdainful

contempt of his word, and obstinate disaffection towards it, do certainly follow, where the Spirit of grace is withheld. In confirmation of this truth, it is written, that the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things spoken by St. Paul. In this instance, you plainly see the man of God preaching Christ, and all that is needful for the conversion of the soul, on the one hand : on the other, the God of all grace exercising his powerful influence, by which the apostle's preaching obtained success. Indeed we are taught always to distinguish between the means and instruments made use of to convey grace to the soul, and the Holy Ghost from whom that grace proceeds. This animated interrogation on the subject is put by the great apostle, " who then is Paul, and who is Apollos? but ministers by whom ye believed, as the Lord gave to every man. I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase," 1 Cor. iii. Here, in the strongest light, the means of grace, and the eternal Spirit from which they receive their whole efficacy, are represented as entirely distinct from each other. By undeniable consequence the foundation of Christian faith is laid by the Holy Ghost in the heart of each believer, and his agency is as real and successful at this hour, as when miracles were wrought by him through the hands of the apostles.

From what has been offered, you may understand the nature of the abiding operation of the Holy Ghost, and know whether it has taken place in your soul or not, by your knowledge or ignorance of Christ crucified.

Besides this, the scripture teaches us to regard the Holy Ghost as the author of every divine temper, by which his indwelling presence is manifested beyond a doubt. If you love God for sending his Son into the world, and feel consciousness of his love to your

soul, this is no more required by your own reflections or conclusions, than the foodful grain which enriches our fields is self-produced. "It is shed abroad in your heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto you." If this love creates joy, from the consideration of the great good you possess, and as an earnest of infinitely better, this sensation, in honor of its author, is called *joy in the Holy Ghost*. If, whilst God and eternal judgment are in all your thoughts, you now possess peace through Jesus Christ, by whom you have received the atonement, when before, mention of such awful subjects excited dread or disgust, this marvellous change claims a divine parent, and is called *the fruit of the Spirit*. If, possessing the heavenly treasure of love, peace, and joy, you are patient in troubles, and under repeated injuries gentle, merciful, and meek, this union of amiable tempers is from above, the superscription of one sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Further, in order to withstand temptation, mortify our evil tempers, and perform obedience, we are taught in scripture to implore the spirit of God, who helps our infirmities in prayer: and all true Christians have access to the Father, through the mediator, by one Spirit, Ephes. ii. 18. And when they are exhorted to be full of the high praises of God, they are exhorted at the same time to be full of the Holy Ghost; which is expressed not only as a promised privilege, but a necessary duty. From whence it is evident, that, without him, all our services will be a maimed sacrifice, and want the very soul which can enliven them.

In a word, to express the never-ceasing agency of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of the faithful, and their perpetual need of it, their life is called *walking, living in the Spirit*.

## SUNDAY XXIII.

## CHAP. XXIII.

On the Properties of the Spirit's Influence, and the daring Impiety of denying it.

**H**AVING produced, from scripture, proofs sufficient of the operations of the Holy Ghost on the understanding and will of man, and pointed out its distinct agency, it is proper, to prevent enthusiastic errors, that some farther observations should be made on the peculiar properties of the Spirit's influence.

It is discernible only by its fruits. He acts in a manner quite similar to the established course of nature. The prophets, apostles, and Christ their head, refer us to the vegetable world for illustration of his influence. As the juices of the earth do not immediately shoot out in fruits or flowers, but are at first received into the root, from thence gradually ascend the trunk, whence they are diffused through the branches, by which means they live and flourish to the conviction of every spectator, whilst the most penetrating cannot tell how, so is it with the agency of the Holy Ghost.—He breathes spiritual life into man, which appears in the turn of mind, the subject of his thoughts and discourse, in his hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, love and hatred. Every one perceives the change, while the author of it remains invisible; and the method in which it has been accomplished incomprehensible. Yet, though the influence be *secret*, its effects is noble and powerful. He who is born of the Spirit is born to conflict, toil, labour, and victory; not so much at present to enjoy, as act;

a power, therefore, is given, proportioned to the difficulties a Christian meets, and the enemies with whom he fights. Thus, it is declared, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world:" the love of its pleasures cannot corrupt him, nor the fear of its frowns deter him from his duty.

But this mighty influence exactly corresponds with the written word; and is preserved and increased by use of the means appointed for this purpose. The Holy Ghost makes no new revelation in point of doctrine or duty, only gives efficacy to what is already revealed respecting both. No other change he works in the soul than what the oracles of God describe and promise, and unprejudiced reason must pronounce excellent and desirable in the highest degree. He works, by apt means, the increase of his own influence, which yet remains distinct from them. As natural life, though perpetually maintained by the power of God, is not miraculously upheld, but in the use of food, exercise, rest, air, and sleep, so the immortal soul, when born of the Spirit, desires the sincere milk of the word, to grow thereby; watches and prays, and, by light from heaven, avoids all things hurtful, and values and prizes whatever can be profitable to it.

This influence varies in its degree. Those who partake of it not only differ from others who share in the same divine privilege, but in the state of their own mind, at different times, with respect to the benefit they enjoy. Some have much more light, comfort, and strength than others: and often the transition from peace to trouble, from tranquility to conflict, is very quick. But this difference in those who live and walk in the Spirit is owing generally to different degrees of watchfulness, diligence, and fidelity in the use of talents intrusted to their care. The Spirit, we are told, is often grieved

and quenched by carelessness, neglect of secret prayer, and meditation on God's word, and much more by self-pleasing compliances, and more still by a fall into a presumptuous offence. In such cases, the paternal justice of God requires proper rebukes should be given; that his children, feeling their own miserable deadness of soul, and being full of uncomfortable reflections, if not of dismal forebodings, may be more vigilant, in future, to avoid every instance of undutiful carriage, and learn to prize the light of God's countenance above every temporal blessing. Whilst to encourage and reward the humble, zealous obedience of those who labour, with all activity, to spread knowledge, and save souls, to comfort the distressed, befriend the poor, the fatherless, and widow, God, Father, Son, and Spirit, will love them with peculiar delight, and come unto them, and make their abode with them. Declarations to this purpose are frequent in scripture, and plainly marked in the lives of the prophets and eminent servants of God. These declarations sufficiently vindicate the doctrine of divine agency on the mind, as if it represented or made men machines; whereas it is impossible for us to do any act with liberty, if we, when our understanding approves, and our heart chooses the service of God as good, are not free indeed.

After the proofs above advanced of the divinity and work of the Holy Ghost, the inference unavoidably follows, how impious is the way of the world, which blasphemes the agency of the Holy Ghost, as the whim of a distempered brain, or the notion of enthusiastic knaves, who make fools of the people.

To cover the daring impiety of these reproaches, it is common to urge the shameless practices of religious men in past and present times. A plea which,

weak as the offence it would excuse, is provoking in the sight of heaven. For what can be more weak than to ridicule and explode a thing, merely because it has been and is abused to purposes totally opposite to its real tendency? Had this argument force, we must renounce the use of reason, no less than reject the doctrine of divine influences: for what can be conceived more injurious to the honor of God, or good of man, than principles which the loudest advocates for the sufficiency of reason's light have published? And if the fancies of wild and wicked enthusiasts, who claim the Spirit's influence to sanctify nonsense, spiritual pride, or, what is worse, to cover villainy and lewdness, be a good reason for denying the influence of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of the faithful; we must also allow that the execrable blasphemies against faith and holiness, vented by many who extol the powers of reason, is as good an argument for suppressing the exercise of the rational faculty, at least for representing it as extremely hurtful, and always to be suspected. For if duty be violated, what does it signify whether the violation proceeds from imaginary inspiration, or self-sufficiency in a worm, who makes his God out of his own brain, and gives him properties pleasing to his own wicked heart? Does not every intelligent person distinguish between the use and abuse of reason? And is it not infatuation to do otherwise? Reason, therefore, and candour, and, what is more, the authority of God, requires you to try, by the touchstone of his word, whatever claims to be the fruit of the Spirit, lest you condemn what is really wise and excellent, when its base counterfeit only deserves to be condemned. If you refuse to examine by this test, it is plain, enmity against the Spirit's influence reigns in your heart; therefore, with impious rashness, you gladly confound things

most widely different, the Spirit of truth with the spirit of delusion.

The other plea urged, with airs of great confidence, against the influence of the Holy Ghost on the heart, is as shamefully inconclusive; ignorance of such influence on their own minds, we know, say all profane, careless, and proud men, nothing of this kind. Argue, therefore, as long as you please about it, we are determined to believe it is only the mere work of imagination. In every other case, you would despise this inference as a palpable absurdity. Was any one to affirm, we never ought to believe another person can possess any excellency to which we are strangers, would not you think their stupidity too great to deserve an answer? We do not esteem brutes *capable of judging* about the perfections of man; nor some men at all more capable of judging what excellencies others have attained. Men eminent in the sciences feel a pleasure, to which all besides are strangers. Should a number of clowns grin and scoff at the mention of such pleasures, confident they have no reality, would not their folly be too gross to need a reply? But the difference between spiritual men, and all who know no more than their own understanding can teach them, is greater than that between clowns and philosophers. This is certain from scripture, because there the difference between men born of the Spirit, and those born of the flesh only, is called a passage from darkness to marvellous light, from death to life, to exercise the mind with high esteem, frequency, and delight, on subjects before neglected, despised, abhorred. Besides, when it is said, we will admit no operation of the Holy Ghost in the soul, because we know not there is any, this is to make their own knowledge the measure of truth; a folly of the largest size. They have a right to say,

“ We indeed know nothing of divine influence on our own hearts ;” we never receive any illumination of our minds, or change in our will, no desire of communion with God, or joy or consolation in Christ. All unreasonable and wicked men, who have not faith, may with great truth speak thus of themselves ; and in this manner the scripture constantly speaks of their condition. But to go farther, and be confident it is the same with all men as with themselves, this is to deny the essential difference which marks those who love and are in Christ Jesus, and separates them from the children of this world. It is impudently to deny there is any work of the Holy Ghost, though the scripture gives a clear, full, distinct account of this work, and of the life it produces and maintains in the soul. It is to lie against the Holy Ghost ; because, if there be no operation from him, then the scripture, which so constantly speaks of his influences, commanding men to seek after them, is a fable, though it be said to be written by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Finally, such an absurd assertion betrays the miserable condition of your soul who make it, since you could not prate with malicious words against this divine Agent, unless you was yourself earthly, sensual, having not the Spirit.

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### PRAYER,

For the influence of the Holy Ghost.

**ALMIGHTY**, eternal Spirit, glory be to thee, by whose inspiration all scripture was given. Glory be to thee, for all the signs and wonders, wrought by thee, through the apostles, to bring the Heathen to be the heritage of the Lord, and the utmost parts

of the earth to be his possession. Thou art the Comforter who dost testify of Christ, and open the eyes of men to behold the excellency of those things, which naturally we receive not, neither can we know them. By thy sacred influence on our minds, may we be able to say with assurance, Jesus Christ is Lord. Glorify him; give us to understand and firmly believe that Jesus, by his death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, hath vanquished Satan, and delivered man.

We desire to live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, to cherish all thy suggestions, and yield ourselves up to be guided by thy counsel.

And knowing how apt pride is to betray us into filthy dreams, and bring reproach upon our Christian profession, we beg we may bear witness to the reality of thy influence in our souls, by bringing forth all the fruit of the Spirit in love, peace, joy, gentleness, meekness, goodness, faith, temperance.

Lead into the way of truth, O Almighty Spirit, all who are deceived by Satan's subtlety; who boast themselves to be full of the Spirit, though they be heady, high-minded, speaking and walking contrary to thy law and testimony. Give them to know and forsake their own delusions: save them, and endure them with a sound mind, before they are called to answer for the offence they give to the weak, and occasion of triumph to the adversaries of the Lord.

O that thou wouldst pity those who mock, like the profane on the day of Pentecost, at the things spoken of thy influence on the members of Christ's church. Bring them, who in ignorance contradict and blaspheme, to faith and repentance, that they may themselves experience those rich blessings they now deride.

O Lord and giver of all spiritual life, hear the prayers of the holy church universal: pour down

thy influence from on high upon all flesh; convert all Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics. And grant that all who hear those oracles written by thy inspiration, may understand, to their salvation, the mystery of God the Spirit, the Father, and of Christ; to whom be everlasting praise, might, majesty, and dominion. Amen.

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## SUNDAY XXIV.

### CHAP. XXIV.

On true and false Repentance.

**T**HE word of our Saviour is express, in concurrence with all the prophets, that without repentance we must perish. This is a truth too plain to be called in question. Yet the love of sin rendering us averse to repent, we naturally substitute something for repentance consistent with self-indulgence, and foolishly trust in this base counterfeit.

To put, therefore, true and false repentance in opposition to each other, will be a subject of much instruction, and great use, through the divine blessing.

Observe, then, false repentance takes its rise only from fear. When conscience sharply accuses and threatens impending destruction; when the law draws up the indictment, thus and thus hast thou done, and the wages of thy sin is death; much distress of mind must be felt, and self-love will prompt to tears and lamentations, to resolutions and promises of amendment, and a renunciation of the beloved

lust, which is now the cause of so much pain and dread. Yet no sooner is the storm over, which fear of death and judgment raised, than the false penitent grows easy; listens again to his vile seducer, and works iniquity with all greediness, till some fresh alarm revives his fears, which again produce the same effects. Thus too many repent and live in sin, till their hypocrisy receives its just reward.

Or perhaps deeper impressions, made by distress of conscience, produce a reformation of manners, and an abiding dread of some presumptuous offence, which has made the false penitent smart so severely. Yet, in this case, the sinner's passions are only chained up, and he deterred, by an external cause, from living after the desires of his heart. It is true terrors often prepare the way for true repentance; but, remaining alone, effect no conversion.

Yet it is much better to tremble under apprehensions of wrath to come, than have no forebodings, and a conscience past feeling. And far the greater part of true penitents, who have been most exemplary, and whose conversion encourages the vilest to turn to God, have first cried for mercy, like the jailor at Philippi, almost at their wits end, for fear of being lost for ever. Instead, therefore, of construing what has been said to expose false repentance, as if you had not taken one step right, because you have turned to God out of fear, let it only excite you to pray, that terrors, and checks, and reformation from mere self-love, which are no certain proofs of true repentance, may be perfected in what undoubtedly are. These certain proofs are, sorrow for sin, and avestion to it, from an abiding conviction of the dishonor and injury it offers to God; from a consciousness that your deportment, and the ruling tempers of your heart, before you turned to God, have been very base and detestable. The language of a true

penitent is this. "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned: mine iniquities are gone over my head as an heavy burden; they are too heavy for me. Deliver me from all my transgressions, let not my sins have dominion over me." Here is hatred of all sin, and grief of heart for having done iniquity: here is a desire, that no lust should be spared, though dear as a right eye. How glaring a difference between the restraints of fear, and casting away sin because compelled for a season by the lashes of a guilty conscience, and loathing ourselves for what we have done, and the very temptations and motives with which we so vilely and readily complied; between a mere regard to our own safety, and ardent fixed desires to conquer corruption in every shape, and live for God alone!

False repentance dishonors God, by distrusting his mercy. It is full of unbelief though a blessed door of hope is opened for sinners of largest size and deepest dye; though pardon and everlasting salvation are offered without money, or price, to ruined sinners, through the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin. Even in this glorious refuge, the false penitent sees no safety. The law of God challenges his obedience, and condemns his transgressions: conscience concurs with the precept and sentence of the law; in order, therefore, to pacify conscience, satisfy the law, and lay a good foundation, as he thinks, of hope, the false penitent is made up of resolutions, promises, attempts to obey better, penances, and a variety of self-righteous schemes. But his sad defects in all these things still leave him in fears, which again excite to new endeavours. Thus a false penitent, notwithstanding the greatness of his sorrow, and the pain of his convictions, still seeks righteousness by his works, afraid to trust in

the mercy of God, manifested in the death of his only Son. Indeed, a false penitent may have so much regard to Christ, as to use his name in prayer for pardon, though he dare not trust in his sacrifice for it: still he has a secret hope that his sorrow, if it were more sincere, his reformation, if more exemplary, and his performance of duties, if more exact, would recommend him to the favour of God, more than Christ's merits can, and prove a better security against punishment. He cannot look for the mercy of God unto eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ; he must feel some worthiness of it in himself.

The nature of true repentance is in every respect different. The true penitent approaches his much injured Maker, feeling his desert of eternal rejection, but he comes before a mercy-seat. He confesses, were God to mark iniquity, he could not stand before him, yet remembers there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared, and plenteous redemption. He looks to the blood of Christ alone to cleanse his soul, and take away the curse due to his great offences. "Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin; purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." This hope of mercy imbitters to him all his sins, makes him loathe them, and cry for deliverance.

Is God ready to forgive, saith the true penitent, and have I sinned against such astonishing goodness? Is sin so hateful to him, that, to make atonement, it must be punished in his dear Son? How then must I appear in his eyes, who am nothing but sin? Have my offences been accessory in nailing Christ to his cross, and bringing him under the agonies of a cursed death, and shall I take pleasure in them again? Have I dishonored God so much already,

loaded his dear Son with so many indignities, and brought such a charge of sin upon myself? It is high time to cast away every vile lust, as an enemy to God.

How plain is the opposition here between flying from God in fear, like Adam after his fall, and an humble self-condemning approach to him, like the prodigal son to his Father; between proud, though earnest attempts to obtain favor with God by newness of life, and dependence for pardon on the blood of Christ alone; between distress from regard to personal safety, and grief and shame for sin, as the greatest evil in the world, and the basest return to God and Christ.

False repentance can consist with aversion to God and his law; in true, the love of both prevails. Those terrors, which awakened sinners feel, arise from lively apprehensions of God's justice. They know they have greatly provoked him, and therefore want some covert from his wrath; and having some idea both of his holiness and power he appears an insupportable enemy. They desire, therefore, to be at peace with him, knowing the quarrel will end in their everlasting destruction. Upon this account they resolve to obey him, as slaves serve diligently a tyrannical master, though their inclination be directly contrary to their work. Thus in the case of false penitents, were the penalty of the law removed, they would presently return to their old course with delight.

The true penitent, on the contrary, sees great excellency in obedience, and strives, for this reason, to obey with all exactness. He grieves, not because the law is so strict, or its penalty so terrible (for he esteems the law to be holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good), but that he is carnal, sold under sin; that, from a nature opposite in its bent to

God, he can make no better progress in his ways and service. He breathes earnestly after holiness, esteeming it no less a blessing than deliverance from condemnation: he does not desire the law should bend to his corruptions, but that his heart should become fully subject to it. To partake of the redemption that is in Jesus, to make a progress in conquering every vile affection, and to live in communion with God, is the whole wish of his soul.

False repentance wears off with the alarming convictions from which it sprung; but true repentance is the *constant* exercise of the soul. Many sad instances we find of persons, who for a time appear under much trouble and sorrow for their sins, yet they return to them. Others quiet their consciences, by reflecting upon the distress they once were in for their sins, and take comfort in their reformation and formal course of religious duties. From hence they become lukewarm and secure. Some of this character will even boast of their experience, and talk of the joy they have in God, whilst they know nothing of humiliation, for their remaining manifold corruptions, imperfect duties, and numerous failings. Hence, their prayers are habitually offered up in a slothful spirit, without desiring an answer; the great things of God's law are but mean in their eyes, and all their religion is reduced to a lifeless form, to God hateful, and to themselves unprofitable.

On the contrary, true repentance produces lasting self-abasement for remaining corruptions, as they are discovered. The true penitent does not forget his past sins, because he has peace with God. The enjoyment of so high a favor makes the remembrance of his offences much more grievous. Not that he looks back to past years for matter of humiliation; his *present* state of mind calls upon him to

renew his confession and sorrow before God. Such frequent workings of a carnal, worldly, unbelieving spirit ; so little love to God or man ; such a taint brought upon the soul, under provocations to envy, pride, anger, impurity, and discontent, though his fellow-creatures see it not, yet he groans often, being burdened with an evil nature. Sorrow and shame therefore for sin, he continues to feel, till death gives him a discharge from this warfare.

Do I know (says the true penitent) that God has pardoned my sins? What an instance of mercy is this! How marvellous the grace which plucked a brand out of the fire! And am I still doing so little for him who hath done so much for me? O vile ingratitude! O that I could obtain more victory over my corruptions! How often have I lamented my infirmities and defects, yet have cause to do so still! How often designing and pursuing closer communion with God, but what a poor progress do I make! How would the defilement found in my best duties separate betwixt God and my soul for ever, had I not the blood of Christ to cleanse me, and the benefits of his intercession, as my glorious Advocate with the Father! O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?



## SUNDAY XXV.

### CHAP. XXV.

The same Subject continued.

**F**ALSE repentance produces only a partial amendment ; true, and equal opposition to every kind

own conduct, as all around him do, and to suppose he has done nothing which calls for godly sorrow, or ought to trouble his conscience : he is confident you greatly injure him by insisting that he can never be saved, without such a sense of sin, loathing of himself, faith in Christ, and zeal to honor God, as constitute true repentance.

In the same mistake a young lady, trained up to affability and politeness, to love peace and harmony, can be guilty of no offence in the eyes of the world, without doing violence to all the restraints of modesty, decency, and character ; of consequence, self-pleasing thoughts of her own virtues will fill her mind : she will hardly believe a young lady of her good character has any occasion to confess her sinfulness before God with shame and sorrow, or that she needs repentance. Many, and of great name too, I allow, are advocates in favor of such amiable persons, who conclude (human frailty considered) none can be in a better state. But the scripture is the decisive standard of right and wrong, and must at last prevail. Now, the scripture has condemned *all*. No sobriety of manners, therefore, no dutiful or kind carriage towards parents and relations, can exempt you from this condemnation : nor can your state be safe, till you have repented. A charge of great sinfulness stands in full force against you, as shall now be proved.

Be it granted that you have been always decent and of good report ; that no relation or friend, touching your behaviour to them, can see any thing which wants amendment. To a better character no one, void of true repentance, can lay claim. Yet, granting all this, an entire change of heart is as necessary before you can please God, or be meet for heaven, as in them whose company you flee for the baseness of their conduct.

Consider, much admired youth, how has your heart stood affected towards your Creator, Preserver, and Judge? You have received from his bounty every endowment which makes you please. He is infinitely excellent. Have you loved him, and from love employed your time, talents, and influence as he has commanded you to do? Do you reverence his word, meditate with pleasure on its sacred contents, and in the solemn hours of prayer, endeavour to honor him by the deep humility of your soul? In obedience to his tender counsel, do you avoid giving into fashionable conversation, calculated to justify and indulge pride, sensuality, ambition, or avarice? Is your desire above all things to live in subjection to God, and continually to depend, as he commands, for righteousness and strength on the Lord Jesus Christ?

If conscience testifies that you are a stranger to such intentions and tempers (and it must testify so, except you have repented), then your life has been led entirely under the power of a depraved mind; it has been one continued course of sin, notwithstanding your many amiable qualities, and all the esteem they have procured you: for your whole study and aim has been to please yourself, and gain reputation. God, his truth, honor, love, and mercies, have been utterly forgotten. In the midst of all that decent regard which you paid without failure to every one around you, God alone has been treated with neglect. But if this be true, what account is to be made of your exemption from the common vices of youth, or your great and good character amongst men? Is not neglect of God, and injustice towards him, a charge of itself sufficiently base and wicked? Does it not call for deep sorrow, for self-abhorrence, for an entire change of mind? Or can any one absurdly suppose all offences immediately

against God are cancelled by amiable deportment to parents, and relations, and friends? Where no desire to please God forms and governs the temper, the difference must be nothing, whether self-love chooses a way of gratification more reputable, or one which men agree to reproach. In both cases, the service of God is equally despised, and himself treated as a cypher. Without true repentance, therefore, you remain involved in all the guilt and misery of a creature fallen from God, setting up your will above his law, and yourself above him; and, dying in such a spirit, you must be lost.

Equally vain (though very common) is it for men to trust in honesty or generosity to relations, dependents and neighbours, as setting a side, in their case, the need of true repentance. What can be more weak? Is no sin but dishonesty forbidden, or hateful to God? Is there the least hint in his revelation, that one or two good qualities will atone for what is wicked and detestable? You may abhor every species of dishonesty, and delight to do acts of kindness, yet be proud and self-sufficient as Lucifer, lustful as a satyr, utterly profane as an infidel; a stranger to every temper a creature and a sinner ought to feel, as much as if you were the vilest cheat on earth. I grant, selfish men extol honesty and benevolence with the loudest applause; yet must the mind be humble, before the honest, generous man can please his Maker. "Though I give all my goods to the poor, and have not love" (the love of God and man, which, before true repentance, can have no place in the heart), "it profiteth me nothing."

When the observance of social duties, therefore, is used as a plea to dispense with godly sorrow for sin, and dependence upon Christ for salvation, the Heaven-daring imagination proves the heart, which

harbours it, totally depraved, and requires as great an exercise of mercy to forgive so wicked a thought, as to pardon those who defraud and injure men.

You have now been instructed in the nature of true repentance; that it is an entire change of judgment, tempers, and practice: and that every creature, fallen from God and righteousness, must experience this divine change, or perish.

I would hope, therefore, your conscience is now in some degree awakened, and that you desire to know what method you must take, in order that your repentance may be unto salvation. If this be your desire, instead of multiplying directions, it will suffice to point out the few which follow.

Read much the scripture, with prayer to understand it, as the method which God has prescribed for your recovery, and dwell on those particular parts which describe the nature of true repentance. The fifty-first psalm delineates, to perfection, all the properties of a contrite spirit returning to God. The fifteenth of St. Luke presents us with an affecting picture of an acceptable penitent; and in the fifth and sixth chapters of the Ephesians, the entire change of heart and life essential to all Christians, is at large laid before you. These, and several similar parts of scripture, you must read with care, and take pains to understand. In this employment, you are seeking after knowledge, and are in the way to have those very dispositions towards God spring up in your soul, which, you read, constitute true repentance.

2. Consider, with much attention, the corruption of your nature. Only commune with your own heart, and you will immediately find your inclinations strongly bent to many things you ought to hate, and that you have a great aversion to things excellent; you will observe an excessive degree of selfishness cleaves to you, and a lamentable indiffer-

oice to the peace, comfort, and welfare of others. Upon examination, you will find many base tempers have a root in your heart, and work on all temptations suited to excite them to your great defilement.

The fruit also of this natural depravity, you must observe, has appeared in your numerous offences. Recollect the several relations and places you from your childhood have lived in, and what your faults were in each. Above all, dwell on what is called in scripture your own iniquity, which has enslaved and defiled you above every other corruption: it may be passion, pride, envy, lewdness, lying love of money, or praise from men. Call to remembrance the many instances in which your sin has broken out, so as to leave great guilt upon your mind, and sharp upbraidings, yet has prevailed after all. Think how you have pleaded for rebellion against God in your own case, stifled convictions, and even presumptuously, and with deliberation, done evil. Think with what neglect and contempt you have treated the gospel, though the wisdom of God, the great result of his infinite understanding and richest mercy. You would not so much as inquire about it, or take the least pains to inform yourself why Christ came into the world, and what benefits are to be received from him. Conclude with reckoning up the several aggravations of your sins; that they have been committed after counsels and reproofs, warnings, judgments, deliverances, and tender mercies. No one has been a transgressor in so little a degree, but upon a fair and honest detail of his offences, so far as conscience has registered them (though there be yet only a small knowledge of duty) but he will find himself an offender far beyond what he has conceived.

This examination must be crowned with prayer, for repentance is the gift of God. We are pleased

to think, it is an easy work to repent, and conclude sickness, or advance in age, or fear of death, will of themselves lead us to repentance. Proud mistake, manifest by daily experience! and a contradiction to the Holy Ghost, who calls repentance the grant of God. To fix on the heart a conviction of sinfulness, and self-loathing for it; to obtain confidence in Christ, and zeal for his honor, evidencing themselves in newness of life, must be the effect of Almighty grace, because self-love violently resents every charge of a heinous nature, and every natural passion rises up in indignation against confessing ourselves to be vile and hell-deserving; whilst it is impossible, without divine light, to see any thing lovely in a God who so severely condemns those very lusts which have long been indulged as sources of our pleasure. Wherefore, from that fountain only whence proceeds every good and perfect gift, you must receive repentance unto life. As a reasonable, immortal creature, you are commanded to repent; and as a helpless sinner, insufficient to every good work, you are also taught to pray for his Spirit, that you may be obedient to his command. It is your own part to confess your own inability to glorify God by true repentance, and implore him, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, to help you effectually against yourself, the world, and Satan. The following prayer, so very humbling, availeth much: "Turn thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned. Save us, and we shall be saved, for thou art our praise."

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## PRAYER,

Suited to the preceding Subject.

GLORY be to Thee, O God, who hast exalted thy Christ to be a Prince and Saviour, to give re-

penitance and remission of sins. Thou hast commanded all men every where to repent, and unless we repent, we must perish. Let no delusions deceive us, and puff us up with pride, no restraints of education or reputation amongst men, or praise from them, make us fancy we are innocent, and need no repentance. From such blindness and hardness of heart, good Lord, deliver us. Convince us it is a great provocation in thy sight for man to say, I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me, for which I ought to mourn. Teach us, O God of truth and mercy, to know the precious grace of repentance from all counterfeits, which deceive so many. Let no other evidence satisfy our souls that we are in the number of those who have repented unto life, but the casting away all our transgressions, loathing ourselves for the evil of our doings, and flying for refuge to the hope set before us in the death of thy Son. Have mercy on all who are wounded in spirit, and distressed for sin; give them beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may flourish as trees of the Lord's planting, that he may be glorified. Bring those to the right use of their reason, who are putting off their repentance to a time of sickness, and the approach of death. Alarm them, and sweep away the refuge of lies in which they hide themselves. Speak by thy Spirit, what is said in thy word, unto all such despisers of their own souls; in the great water-floods, they shall not come nigh thee. If thou say, in thy heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, I will come in an hour when thou art not aware, and cut thee asunder, and appoint thee thy portion with hypocrites and unbelievers.

Lord, thou seest the lie so many workers of iniquity hold fast, that no harm shall ever happen unto them; that thou art merciful to save even those who

die in their sins. Pull down, even to the ground, this strong-hold of thine enemies. May none cry to themselves peace and safety, till they have repented, and obeyed from the ground of the heart, walking as dear children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. These blessings we ask of thee, holy Father, in dependence upon the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ the righteous, who has commanded repentance and remission of sins to be preached in his name to every creature. *Amen.*

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## SUNDAY XXVI.

### CHAP. XXVI.

The Tempers of a Christian towards God, and the Principles which form them.

**G**OD, in himself infinitely excellent, and to us perpetually bountiful, has a double claim to rule in our hearts without a rival. Yet we naturally neglect him, and find all our pleasure in living as our own masters. And it is owing to the doctrines of the gospel revealed in the heart by the Holy Ghost, that a Christian entirely renounces all disaffection to his Maker, and glorifies him with body, soul, and spirit.

*The grace of God*, saith the scripture, "which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching them (by such a display of infinite good-will) to deny ungodliness;" no more to insult their adorable Benefactor by rebellion, or dishonour him by neglect. The doctrines of grace make every duty appear rational, and win the heart to the practice of

universal godliness. Having, therefore, explained and established these doctrines, which constitute the divine knowledge peculiar to a Christian, I proceed to delineate the several excellent tempers by which he stands distinguished from the unbelieving, and that practice which shews forth the praises of his God and Saviour, who hath called him out of darkness into marvellous light.

We begin with those tempers, which every real Christian exercises towards God.

The first is fear, one of the chief springs which govern the human mind. Some suitable object, therefore, must needs engage *our fear*, to keep us from the influence of imaginary terrors, or of things little to be dreaded, whilst we remain duly sensible to impressions from what is of greatest moment. In this excellent manner, fear is regulated in the Christian's breast. Inferior causes and temporal evils, he knows, are only instruments in the hands of God, subserving his will; therefore he sanctifies the Lord God in his heart. "He is his fear and his dread." A God too wise to mistake, too just to do wrong, too mighty to be resisted, and too good to be known, without adoration of his name, and self-abasement before him. The fear of a Christian produces no uneasy feeling respecting God; it is the fear of a creature towards a merciful Creator; of a sinner redeemed by the richest act of love, and of a child towards an affectionate father. In the same proportion, therefore, as he increases in the knowledge, he increases in the fear of God, for they are inseparable from each other. So inseparable, that the inhabitants of Heaven cry out, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, O King of Saints! Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" It is in general a noble, ingenuous fear of the Lord, and his

goodness, which rules a Christian. But as he is encompassed with allurements to bribe, with foes to intimidate, and sensible objects which make a forcible impression, it is necessary, "in seasons of violent temptation," to call to remembrance the wrath revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

This fear produces, in every real Christian, "a readiness to obey God with a cheerful mind, and without reserve." He beholds his Maker's absolute dominion over him founded in his very being. Every faculty of his soul, and member of his body, is given at first, and perpetually preserved by the act of God; consequently, when he requires *both* to be employed according to his will, he does but appoint the use of what is his own absolute property. Ever conscious of this truth, a Christian resolutely regards the authority of God, in a world which despises it; and uniformly persists to obey his commands, though natural corruption, worldly interest, and the terror of custom, continually oppose. In his judgment, the command of God alone constitutes a practice perfectly reasonable, and absolutely necessary. Yet, conscious of his proneness to yield to sin, and prevaricate in his obedience, he calls upon his God. "O teach me thy statutes: set my heart at liberty, that I may run the way of thy commandments. O save me, for I seek thy commandments." And if, by surprise or violent temptation, he fall into sin, shame and pungent grief succeed his transgression; and, like a man oppressed with bodily disease, he groans, being burdened with misery on account of his vileness, and longs to have his backslidings healed.

He cannot but be thus affected, because *gratitude* to God is an essential part of a Christian's temper. His food by day, his sleep by night, his rai-

ment, health, strength, and safety (rich blessings, though rarely noticed, and received with thankfulness) make suitable impressions on his mind. He says to himself, there is an eagerness to embrace the first opportunity of convincing our affectionate friends we are sensible of their kindnesses : and all are ready to brand the ingrate, who utterly forgets his liberal patron. And where obligation is the greatest, shall gratitude be set at nought ? Shall I treat my supreme benefactor with contempt ? How inexcusably base would this be, were I indebted to him only for the comforts of this life ? But my debt is beyond all that can be reckoned up. He might justly have cut me off in my sins, or left me in the delusions of pride, and unbelief of my heart : but he hath forgiven all my offences, covered all my sin, conquered my haughty spirit, and created me again after his own image. I am able to comprehend, with all saints, the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love of Christ ; and I know what reproach and misery the Lord of life and glory bore to save my soul. On one hand, I see the fathomless abyss of woe, from which he preserved me ; on the other, the exceeding eternal weight of glory ready to be revealed in me. Whilst I meditate upon these things, assured of their certainty, I say, even the stones of the street might well cry out against me, if I was not fired with gratitude to make some becoming return ; I am glad to confess no slave so absolutely the property of his master by purchase, as I am Christ's ; nor any pensioner on royal bounty so obliged to honor the king for a rich undeserved provision, as I am to love and please my God, both with soul and body, which are his.

Such, it is evident from the apostle's declaration, are the feelings of a Christian ; for when he is shewing what influenced him, and all the faithful, to

serve the Lord with such eminent zeal, to the hazard of their lives, he says, "The love of Christ constraineth us;" like a mighty swelling tide, it bears us above all opposition, carrying forth our souls in lively acts of gratitude towards God.

With gratitude, *affiance* is strictly connected, for when we know our benefactor hath bestowed upon us many rich favours, we are then able to trust in his goodness. It is thus the sin of unbelief, so sharply upbraided in scripture, so dishonourable to God, so sadly perplexing and hurtful to the soul, is conquered in the heart of a Christian. And though, in seasons of extreme trouble and temptation, he may be sometimes afraid, he can say with truth, yet will I put my trust in God. A Christian can do this, because many exceeding great and precious promises are given to him for this very purpose, that his faith and hope may be in God. He cannot open the scripture without meeting with animating descriptions of the Lord God Omnipotent, as full of compassion, abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.

Besides, he knows the love wherewith God hath loved him. He hath promised (saith a Christian) to bring every one to glory, who believes in the name of his only begotten Son, and confirmed the inestimable promise by covenant and oath. It would be the height of presumption in me to expect what God has no where engaged himself to bestow; but after he hath given such exceeding great and precious promises and is able to do exceedingly above all that I can ask or think, it would be casting reproach upon his faithfulness and bounty, to harbour fears and suspicions of his good-will towards me.

But though a Christian first trusts in the Lord, and stays himself upon his God from faith in the

promises, yet, after growth in grace, his experience strongly confirms his trust; because all that help, protection, and comfort, which the promises encouraged him to expect, he has now, in many instances, seen accomplished. A vast variety of temptations, dangers, and enemies, try the word of the Lord to the uttermost, whether there be any deceit in it. But the experiment, though ever so often repeated, only enhances its value. The mortification of my vile affections (says the Christian), my deliverance from deceit and violence, both used to destroy my soul; my pleasures and consolations in the service of Christ exactly correspond with the account given of these things in the word of God. From this complete evidence, therefore, he sees it is good for him to put his trust in the Lord God. And though the workings of unbelief are very far from being utterly extinct, they are always lamented, resisted, and at length put to flight. He rises superior to every trial, when he is enabled, through much prayer, and confession of his own evil heart of unbelief to receive that comprehensive word of promise; "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." Afflictions, he says, though sharp and long continued; injuries most maliciously designed or whatever way sufferings come upon me, they are not the scourge of an enemy, or the wound of a cruel one, nor do they come by chance; they are sent to do me good. This is all the fruit, to take away sin; he afflicts for my profit, to make me partaker of his holiness. Therefore will I patiently wait, and quietly hope, for the expected end.

Thus the Christian, by passive obedience to the will of God, honours him in the midst of all his troubles; he honours him no less "by doing all things to the glory of God." Glory is the shining forth of some excellency. We give it to men,

when, with high esteem and cordial regard, we speak of their worth, and the good which the world hath received from them. The Christian has a single intention, in this manner, to glorify God. He would convince all, by his whole life and conversation, that he engages in his service on account of his goodness, wisdom, holiness, and sovereign dominion, which all appear to him in the most amiable light. False motives, which form many shining characters, have no influence in his heart. Fear of shame, or loss, do not restrain him from evil; nor love of praise, or self-applause, excite him to do well; but sense of duty, and regard to his Maker's honour. He offers up all his social virtues, as he does his devotion, with a pure desire that God may be better served by himself, and all around him. The usefulness of actions to society, is all the world regards. To them the end and design for which they are done, is nothing. A Christian, on the contrary, knows the temper of the mind stamps the value of the action, and above every thing the respect it has to God. When he discharges, therefore, the duty of his particular station (be it that of a master, husband, or father, a son, a servant, or tradesman, a magistrate, or pastor), he would have all understand, he is conscientious in his practice, not to be highly esteemed and commended, but because he knows all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, and is persuaded he hath given us a law, in all these respects, which ought not to be broken. It is this heaven-born intention which consecrates his whole behaviour, and makes it truly religious.

Inseparable from this constant intention of giving honour to God in the eyes of men, is *purity of heart*. A Christian prevents sin from conceiving, by resisting its first appearance in the soul. Though he

cannot root out the corruption of nature, nor totally suppress the rising of evil thoughts or sensations, he is uneasy when he feels them, as kings are at the rising up of rebellion in their realm. He entreats his God to send him immediate help, and expel his enemies. What was at first an involuntary motion within (sad indication of his fall from original righteousness), he will not suffer to grow exceeding sinful by cherishing it; because this would be a plain proof of love for sin, though selfish motives might restrain from the commission of it.

This excellent temper of a Christian must be more particularly explained. Observe him in the flower and prime of life; he not only avoids the brothel and harlot, he is offended at foolish jesting, at the impure lustings of his heart, and the wanton pictures a corrupt imagination would be drawing before his eyes. In business, he does much more than use a just weight and measure: he resists the love of money and inordinate gain. In his behaviour towards competitors and enemies, he does much more than abstain from slander and railing; he condemns and resists silent envy, secret animosity, and injurious surmises, as the offspring of base selfishness. He appears guilty of revenge and malice in his own eyes, when he detects himself listening with satisfaction to those who speak evil of his foes, though the evil be true. To mention no more instances, the Christian is not only careful to avoid setting off his own accomplishments, which good sense and good manners teach; but he maintains a steadfast opposition to self-applause and self-admiration, not ceasing till he hath put to flight these grand opposers of the glory of God, the giver of every good and perfect gift. In each of these instances, and more which might be named, a Christian honours his Maker, as searcher of the heart, and Lord of con-

science; before whom the fervent desire of his soul continually ascends in this prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts; see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

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## SUNDAY XXVII.

### CHAP. XXVII.

On the Tempers of a Christian towards God.

**CARE** to imitate the example which he left us, when he was manifest in the flesh, is a principal part of a Christian's temper. He watches, prays, and labours with success, to have implanted in his soul mercy, forbearance, love of righteousness, and hatred of iniquity. These excellencies in Jesus Christ, without measure, he contemplates; upon this all-perfect pattern his eyes are fixed, as a limner's on an invaluable original, which he copies; and, by persevering attention, its transforming efficacy is felt in his soul.

But granting mere character, though bright as an angel's, is too refined to produce imitation, a Christian has the express command of his Lord, whom he loves to obey, enjoining him to tread in his steps. "Ye call me master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you," John xiii.

This injunction has a strong tendency to make every temper, contrary to the mind that was in

Christ, appear to a believer deformed, and very criminal. He sees the mean hypocrisy of professing to be a follower of Christ, without conformity to his image; a conformity which manifests itself by a measure of every grace which shone in his life; and in hatred, not of one evil temper or another, but of the whole body of sin. Though some may represent this as carrying the holiness of a Christian to an unwarrantable height, we have authority incontestable to affirm, that every living member of Christ's church must shine in a real resemblance of his moral excellency. We all beholding as in a glass (in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ) the glory of the Lord, are changed into his image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of our God. And this imitation of Christ becomes easy, from the love a Christian bears towards him: for we copy with pleasure the manners of the person we admire; especially if, added to his excellencies, his generosity to us has been striking and most beneficial. This is the case between creatures, whose richest favours are but a small value, and amongst whom the brightest characters are very imperfect. How much more powerfully must a Christian's heart be affected in pondering the riches of the Saviour's love, and his unspeakable kindness! He is drawn by a secret attraction to imitate his character, who is his peace and hope, his life, and God, and all.

Such love does more than excite to imitation; it creates love to God, and supreme delight in him. Man, sunk under bodily appetites, understands not that God can be a richer source of present joy, than money, grandeur, sensuality, or even the sciences. Hence, expressions of supreme love to him, though unsullied by enthusiasm, fall under censure with the world. They will have it, that such expressions, though they abound in scripture, are without a

meaning. And what we call warmth of affection towards God is all ascribed to temperature of body, quicker circulation of the blood, or the power of imagination.

A Christian on the contrary, loves the invisible and eternal God as really as covetous men love their money, the voluptuous their gross delights, or parents their offspring. He loves him, because his name is all excellent, and his goodness eclipses, at once, all that is praised amongst men. Almighty power manifest in his works, unerring wisdom, unblemished truth, tender mercy, holiness which cannot bear with evil; in short, every thing fitted to raise the admiration of an intelligent being is united in God, and made palpable by his revelation of himself in Christ Jesus. From these views a Christian is won to love God, and express his love, by entertaining high and adoring thoughts of him; by meditating on him with pleasure.

This love of God for his own perfections, though not commonly discerned in a Christian at first, yet, as he grows in knowledge and faith, becomes indisputable. It has a strong influence, even whilst he doubts whether he shall be saved; because he will still esteem and speak good of his name: he will constantly and zealously maintain his truth, and commend his precepts, be faithful in his service, and prize nothing so much as his favour.

Besides the incomparable excellency of God, a Christian has other motives to love him; for the more benefit we derive from any person excellent in himself, the more life we feel in our affections towards him. But the chief good to a Christian is his God; all beneath him is mean, transitory, dissatisfying. But his glory shining into the mind, and his peace enjoyed, make him cry out, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth I

desire besides thee." He cannot be happy whilst a cloud remains upon his mind, and prevents his fellowship with the Father and with the Son. The vehement desires of his soul he expresses in such requests as these: "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." And when he can call God his God, it animates and gives him joy, more than all riches; it satisfies him in the midst of trouble. Under false accusations and reproach, he finds comfort in the thought, that his best friend can never be deceived, but will, in due time, make his innocence shine forth. In afflictions, distresses, and necessities, it is his strong support, that the Lord knoweth his path; and when he is tried, he shall come forth as gold. In national calamities, which spread consternation on every side, a Christian finds a place of refuge, and a never-failing spring of peace, so as to possess his soul in patience, knowing he hath a treasure above the reach of all that annoys and terrifies the children of men.

Such illustrious proofs of love to God, and the all-sufficient comfort it affords, we find on record, even before the kingdom of Heaven was preached. This more full display, therefore, of divine love to men must certainly be equal to such a blessed effect. Habakkuk, strong in faith, could say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the field, and there shall be no herd in the stall: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Could a man of like passions with ourselves experience such full consolation from the love of God, under the comparative dimness of the Jewish dispensation? Certainly, now

the day-spring from on high has visited us, the love of God will enable a Christian to feel as high delight in him. And if we see very few experience any thing comparable to this, yet the *desire* of all who are Christians in truth is to do so. They prove this, by condemning and opposing the first tendency in themselves to impatience, though in great tribulation. They lament the weakness of their faith, saying "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou so disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I will yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

Whether, therefore, the Christian be weak or strong, it is apparent that his love is set upon God. When he rejoices in pain and tribulation, then his love to God flames forth with astonishing brightness. When he grieves that he cannot find his heart thus honour him, it is as sure a proof of supreme love; because, otherwise, he could not possibly feel grief and shame for want of joy in the Lord at such a season. To natural men, it is a thing unintelligible. The utmost they suppose man's fortitude of mind can reach, is to bear with calmness, as our lot, the pains and troubles we meet with. A Christian's desire, therefore, to be strengthened with all might, according to God's glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, from the knowledge of what God is to him, and has done for him, is a demonstration that he loves and delights in God.

## SUNDAY XXVIII.

## CHAP. XXVIII.

On the Tempers of a Christian towards God.

**I**T is a temper peculiar to a Christian to use, with diligence and pleasure, the appointed means of growth in knowledge, faith, love, and every grace. Naturally, we have a strong aversion to these means. Confession of sin, prayer to God, study of his word, worship of him in public, and receiving the sacrament, are very dull, heavy, and irksome, till we love God. These things we may do in a slovenly manner from tradition, and blind imitation of our fathers, or be dragged to them to pacify conscience, or, from the leaven of the Pharisees working in us, labour stoutly to gratify our self-exalting pride. Hence, the whole devotion of the multitude is comprehended in a few minutes morning and evening, and a customary attendance at church on Sundays, where much observation is made on what passes without, little attention paid to the inward man of the heart, and no more consciousness of pleasure is felt in the whole, than a child feels in repeating words by rote.

How different the temper of a Christian! Knowing the sinfulness of his past life, when all the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart were evil only, and that continually, and feeling so much disorder and depravity still remaining, it is a relief to his soul to pour out complaints against himself, prostrate with holy shame before the greatness of eternal Majesty, to whom, notwithstanding all his vileness, he is infinitely dear. Then are opened the springs of ingenuous sorrow, then the most pure and solid satisfaction

is felt within, in giving glory to the holiness of God. The Christian has also *much pleasure* in making known his requests to God by prayer: because he earnestly desires spiritual blessings and graces, and is certain that every good and perfect gift shall be given liberally to them who ask in faith. As hunger and thirst, therefore, seek their proper gratification, and the desire of every thing living is turned to what it apprehends will do it good, so the hunger and thirst of a Christian is to receive the supplies which can enrich his soul. Far, therefore, from thinking prayer a burden, or performing it merely as a duty, the Christian is *always praying*, unless some difficult business engross his attention. All places can bear witness to his devout aspirations. No sooner does sleep depart from him on his bed, then he is awake to the most sublime sensations: "With my soul, O God, have I desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." From the same love to God, naturally arises joy in extolling the name of such an almighty friend. It becometh well, says a Christian, the just to be thankful. "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise his holy name: for he hath delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. My mouth is filled as it were with marrow and fatness, whilst I am praising thee with joyful lips." This spiritual pleasure is as delicious to me, as the glutton's feast is to his palate, when swallowing the richest dainties.

Every thing which belongs to God, and is intended to manifest his excellencies and will, are delightful to a Christian. His word, his day, his house, and his servants in the ministry, and the memorial of his abundant goodness and dying love, are highly esteemed, and the use of them much enjoyed. "How I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. One

day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of ungodliness." How beneficial to the souls of men their preaching, who bring glad tidings, who publish salvation, who are given by the risen and ascended Saviour, for the work of the ministry in the conversion of sinners, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, which is the church. And how affecting and tender, how gracious and benevolent, the command given by Jesus to his children, to make his sacrifice more precious to them, that, with deep humility, gratitude, and joy, they should eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, as a publick testimony that every blessing they receive from God, and every good they expect, descends to them only through the blood and righteousness of God our Saviour. Every one of these institutions I revere and observe, to my edification and great comfort. And though it must be confessed, the most lively and devoted Christians too often feel no delight in holy duties, yet this is lamented and felt as a burden. God is always the object of their reverence and trust, gratitude and love. Whether, in solemn acts of devotion, their pleasures rise or fall, they punctually offer up prayers and praises, never weary of God or duty, though more and more so of that body of death, which so sorely hinders and oppresses them, when they would be all self-abasement, faith, love, and zeal, in approaching the throne of grace.

But this glaring proof of inbred sin, which a Christian laments, tends to increase another excellent temper in him, *humility*. By humility, I do not mean his entertaining a worse opinion of himself, or abasing himself lower than he really ought to do, but a just sense of his weakness, corruption, and sinfulness in the sight of God. Men shamefully dissemble here,

if not openly contradict their Maker ; for though they confess *some* faults, they fancy they have more good qualities, and over-rate what they own a gift from Heaven, because it belongs to themselves. They will not allow, that after all they have done and received, each has nothing to say for himself, but " God be merciful to me a sinner," through the atonement. But a Christian knows his poverty and guilt, in his best estate on this side glory. As a scholar, who hath reached into the depth of science, sees much more of his own ignorance than when he began ; so, the more the Christian advances in the knowledge of God, himself, and his duty, he becomes sensible of many and great defects which before escaped his notice, and sees himself at more distance from *perfection* than ever. The law of God, says he, I know, requires a perfect regularity of temper, and perfect rectitude in every motion of the heart under all temptations ; that not so much as the least taint of sin should come upon my mind, no wandering in prayer, no defect in active zeal to do good by every talent and power, no warping of my affections from God, or deviation from his will upon any account. Seeing the line of duty in this extent, and acknowledging that in " this manner God ought to be honoured and obeyed by all reasonable creatures," his innumerable faults glare before him ; and whilst his deportment is blameless, nay, exemplary in the sight of men, he feels cause to implore forgiveness of his trespasses, and to cry out, " Behold, I am vile. Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

Thus is the Christian taught effectually humility by the knowledge of God's law, and not less by the knowledge of the gospel. Have my sins (says he) rendered me so guilty in the eye of God, that it

would reflect dishonor upon his majesty to receive my prayers, or shew me mercy, but in consideration of the death and intercession of his own Son; and can I in this state regard myself as any thing better than a sinner? Shall I conceit I am perfectly free from defilement, when I am not permitted so much as to ask pardon, without imploring the mediation of Christ? Thus deeply laid is the foundation of Christian humility, a grace which acts as an antidote to the first-born sin of man, and a guard against every delusion of Satan. By it a Christian is made meet for that world, where God is all in all; where, ever sensible of infinite distance from him, though endowed with surpassing excellencies, angels abase themselves before him, and cover their faces with their wings, whilst they cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty."

I have laid before you, in one view, the chief of those excellent tempers respecting God, the object and end of all duty, which dwell in every real Christian. If you, who read these pages, are *utterly* destitute of any one of the tempers above described, call not yourself a Christian, for you deceive yourself with an empty name. It is true, these several tempers adorn the several members of Christ's church in different degrees; shining forth in some with brighter lustre, with less in others, as stars differ from each other in glory. Yet the joint influence of all is as essential to the very being of a real Christian, as every member of the body, or leading faculties of the soul, are to constitute a man complete. With as much propriety, a mutilated form, or monstrous birth, may be deemed perfect, because it has life, as a soul, void of one of these tempers, be called a Christian. For what greater absurdity can you affirm than that a man can be a Christian without the fear of God, or unfeigned submission to his author-

ity; a Christian without gratitude to his Maker, or affiance in his goodness, a Christian without love to Christ, without piety, without humility? Take away any one of these disposition, and you rob the soul of that which must express the spiritual life it possesses.

Examine therefore yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. If a man say he hath faith, and hath no works, can *that* faith save him? You may leave out, or put what you please into the character of one you choose to call a Christian. You may make baptism sufficient, or an assent to the truth of scripture, and that capital doctrine in it, that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ who should come into the world, and on this ground worship among Christians. Nevertheless the unchangeable standard is, the character of a Christian delineated in the word of God. This speaks so plainly, it needs no comment. It speaks to men of every age; it makes no difference, and allows of no abatement; it peremptorily affirms, in a variety of expressions, all importing the same universal change of temper respecting God, that they who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.

This alone is the Christian character, though it were to be found only in one of a thousand, in one of a nation. To delude ourselves with popular notions which reduce the Christian character to a receiving certain articles of faith, and a regular observance of some religious ceremonies, is the sure way to confirm infidels in contempt of the gospel, and sooth men in their ruinous conceit, that the form of godliness is sufficient without the power.

As you desire, therefore, to obtain salvation, and would not be found a hypocrite in the great day, take good heed that you worship God in spirit and

in truth ; that the most exact observer of your life and tempers shall be compelled to own, that all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, prove, and strongly recommend, the excellency of your faith in his name.

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## PRAAYER,

Suited to the preceding Subject.

**O GOD**, Father of angels and men, who wast in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto thyself, give us grace, we beseech thee, to serve thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear, that we may have respect to all thy commandments. Add, **O** our God, to all the multitude of mercies we have received, this great one, of a thankful heart ; penetrate our souls with a sense of our infinite obligations to thee. Created, preserved, and redeemed by thee, give us grace to present ourselves, our souls, and bodies, a living sacrifice. Save us from an evil heart of unbelief. In pressing difficulties, how ready are we to distrust thy goodness ! How hard do we find it, to rely upon thy word and thy invisible power ! We have often given thee cause to complain of us, and say, How long is it ere this people will believe me ? May we receive thy promises in the full assurance of faith, and wait the accomplishment of them in hope, though all things seem to go contrary to them.

To thy rich bounty, **O** our God, we are indebted for all our talents and faculties, which exalt us above the beasts of the field ; and thou hast given them to us, for thy own glory. May we diligently use them all to promote that great end ; to spread the savour of the knowledge of thy truth, and convince all men who observe our life, that we desire God in all things

may be glorified. Give us grace to honor, thee by hating vain thoughts, by never suffering that to lodge within, which we dare not indulge. May we have power to walk in this world as Christ walked in love to thee, in victory over the temptations which surround us, in the enjoyment of thy presence, waiting till we come to the spirits of the just made perfect. Till that blessed change takes place, teach us diligently, and with delight, to use every means which thou hast appointed to keep the remembrance of thee and thy benefits fresh upon our minds; and, sensible of the glory of thy Majesty, and our own meanness, of thy spotless purity, and our great and manifold pollutions, may we ever walk humbly with our God, judging ourselves unworthy to lift up our eyes unto Heaven, or take thy name within our lips, though thou humblest thyself to dwell with men.

In this manner may we, day by day, worship thee, O Lord our God, in the beauty of holiness; and may every thing short of such substantial goodness appear to us no better than empty form. Till we finish our course, be thou our exceeding joy; that when we enter eternity, we may find the delight of angels and glorified saints, the very happiness we were accustomed, in a measure, to enjoy before.

We beg an answer to these our requests for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Redeemer. Amen.

## SUNDAY XXIX.

## CHAP. XXIX.

The Tempers of a Christian towards his Fellow creatures:

**T**HE scripture teaches us, that God has made all things for his own glory. Yet, far from requiring any duty from us detrimental to men, it is impossible to please him without being a friend to human kind. No parent ever so affectionately studied the happiness of his offspring, or took so much pleasure in their harmony, as the Father of our spirits in seeing us all obey his great command, of loving one another.

Were his command universally obeyed, the church of Christ would be a picture of Heaven, a perpetual circulation of mutual good-will. It is, alas! too true, that few out of a multitude of Christians professed have ever been subject to this law of love. Nevertheless, it is the noble peculiarity of a real Christian to behave towards others as every man living would wish to have all men do towards himself; and to stand as much distinguished by excellent tempers towards men, as by faith, love, and devotion towards God.

These excellent tempers I shall now delineate, proving every real Christian must be an invaluable blessing to society, whilst he stands forth an intrepid witness for the peculiar doctrines of the everlasting gospel.

May the God of the Christians make this representation of their duty towards men effectual to convince the reader, that if he wishes well to mankind, their good can never be so much promoted, nor so,

in fact, secured by any thing, as embracing the faith of Christ.

In delineating the tempers of a Christian, I shall begin with that eminent one, *sincerity*. As a Christian, you will esteem it your duty constantly to speak the truth; to give no commendations where you do not think they are due; to flatter no one as possessing excellencies he hath not; nor speak as if you regarded them with peculiar affection, when by this you only mean to pay court. Though, amongst the refinements of the polite, and in the commerce of the world, this be a requisite accomplishment, in fact it is a mean and detestable dissimulation.

Sincerity in your conversation will be attended with equal sincerity respecting all your promises and engagements. Besides a general obligation to speak truth, which breach of promise violates, you would in this case incur additional guilt; since, when you promised to do a good office, or confer a benefit, immediately in the court of conscience, before the God of truth, the right of the thing promised passes from you to the receiver of it. Wherefore, without his leave, you have no more right to recal it than if you had given him a legal bond; consequently you will esteem yourself obliged to perform your word, though it may be much to your prejudice, in every instance where you have made a promise; unless some specified conditions not fulfilled, or something concealed, vacates its obligation: and when your testimony is given upon oath, laying aside all affection or prejudice, and unawed by the great, you will represent every thing as it has fallen under your notice. In these important and similar instances, you will be sincere, whilst your motives to be so are very different from those which have weight with upright moralists, and much superior. He may be an advocate for sincerity, because it is

the cement of society, and the only foundation of mutual confidence. Feeble motives, alas! when opposed to violent selfishness, under temptations to gain, by the sacrifice of honesty and truth.

The glorious God, on the contrary, is your encouragement and support, O Christian, in the exercise of this temper. Truth is what he commands, and delights in. "These are the things that ye shall do," saith the Lord; "Speak ye every man truth to his neighbour," Zech. viii. He stigmatizes the want of sincerity, and threatens every false tongue with endless woe. In the character given of a member of Christ, and an heir of glory, you are assured he hateth lying, Prov. xv, and speaketh the truth in his heart, Psal. xv. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord," Prov. xii. "A mark that men are of their father the devil, and the lusts of their father they will do," John viii. "And that whosoever loveth and maketh a lie, shall be cast into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," Rev. xxi.

A desire, therefore, to please God, a regard to his high and amiable authority, and a fear of incurring his righteous displeasure, all work together, so that you can meet with no evil great enough to deter, or bribe sufficient to make you violate truth and sincerity. Add to this, the Holy Ghost, which every true believer in Christ receives, is the Spirit of truth, and his fruit is in all righteousness and truth: it is not, therefore, possible to be a Christian, and at the same time false and insincere, for the sake of your own paltry interest and worldly gain.

If your conscience, therefore, accuses you in this matter, your religion is vain. Be assured, it is not making many prayers, glorying in your experience; it is not extolling free grace, or affecting to cover yourself with the righteousness of Christ, or any zeal you may express for his honour, that will ei-

ther excuse or screen you in your falsehood and insincerity. On the contrary, if you can thus abuse the grace of God, it proves your idea of him is infinitely despicable; you make him even worse than yourself, a God pleased with what kindles resentment in your breast, deceitful fair speeches, and designing flattery, as if, for the sake of such nauseous compliments, he would dispense with the weighty matters of the law. Every Christian is called upon to lay this matter much to heart, and be careful, above all things, his sincerity be put beyond a doubt; because a general suspicion is entertained, and too much cause in a thousand instances has been given for it, that religious people, of all others, are not to be trusted, thinking themselves at liberty to deal deceitfully with men, whilst they profess extraordinary fervours of devotion, and zeal for the honour of God and Christ; a practice mean and odious to the last degree; a rock of offence to all the world; and a greater hindrance, than any other, to the progress of true religion in it.

With the love and practice of sincerity, there is joined, in every real Christian, the love and practice of justice too. Has the providence of God invested you with the dignity of a magistrate, senator, or judge? you will see that the poor and oppressed have right, and punish the oppressor; you will be active to put salutary laws in execution, to establish and promote peace.

Mindful of God, the high ordainer of all government, to whom every one intrusted with any part of it stands accountable, you will discharge your duty. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness," saith the Lord, "in judgment. Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty, but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour," Lev. xix. "He that ruleth over men"

(like the prince of peace, whom these words describe) "must be just, ruling in the fear of God, and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain," 2 Sam. xxiii.

Have you numerous dependents? From the abundance of your wealth, if a Christian, you will be just towards them all; you will scorn to extort the utmost your estates can produce, till honest husbandmen groan under the load of rents extravagantly advanced; you will abhor the custom of owing large sums of money for furniture, equipage, apparel, or the table, whilst your tradesmen are distressed to pay their creditors for what you have pretended to buy of them, but never paid for: to distress them with fear of bankruptcy, if you refuse to discharge your debts to them, or of starving through your cruel resentment, if they attempt to recover their right.

The sacred rule of your conduct is, *Owe no man any thing*: and the opposite practice, though there be no remedy against it for tradesmen, but such as they are most unwilling to use, is marked as the object of God's severe displeasure. "Behold the hire of the labourers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton." The application of this alarming word to those who keep their tradesmen an unreasonable time out of their money, is direct, and must make effectual impression on all who fear God.

Are you occupied in trade and merchandise? Here the energy of your Christian faith is to shine. It will not suffer the love of money to lay waste your con-

science, or seduce you to take advantage of the ignorance or distresses of those you deal with; to put off bad for good commodities, or take exorbitant gain for what you sell. It is said, with great assurance, no man can live thus honestly as the world now is. A righteous man, dealing with conscience amidst those who have none, is a sheep among wolves, sure to fall a prey; and if he will not give over his business, he must soon lose all his substance. This reasoning I allow is plausible; and very difficult it is not to be carried away with the general practice of using first little frauds, till grosser succeed, and give no pain, and till the acquisition of a large estate be judged man's supreme good, and a scanty income the greatest evil.

Nevertheless, every real Christian must be a truly honest man; for though, before the truth is received, men are not able to stem the torrent, nor face a threatening storm; afterwards, no room is left for infidel excuses, constantly urged to palliate unjust dealings, as if there was no provision for this life in a strict observance of justice.

The Lord, whose is the earth and the fulness thereof, gives you his own inviolable promise, and pawns his honour for your maintenance and prosperity, if you will deal uprightly. "Thou shalt not have in thy bags, says he, divers weights, a great and a small," [the one to buy, the other to sell with]; "thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small; but thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have, that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee; for all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination to the Lord thy God," Deut. xxiii. You say, iniquity in trade is almost universal; but is it the less evil, or the less abhorred

of God on that account? "Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins," Micah vi.

If it be said, love to yourself and family must gain the ascendent, and prevail over you to use common frauds, I answer, this temptation will be withstood from a clear conviction which every real Christian possesses, that he and his family become obnoxious to God by presumptuous offences. "The curse of God is in the house of the wicked. Woe unto him that buildeth his house with unrighteousness. Be not deceived, the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Besides, the Lord who redeemed you, and from whose grace you expect eternal life, whose eyes is ever upon you, strictly requires, "All things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them; for this is the law and the prophets."

After these full instructions, clear commands, and denunciations, all righteous and unalterable, were you to give in to the frauds so common in trade, or do any thing unjustly, you must bid farewell to peace of conscience, and to that delightful communion with God which has been the sweetest comfort of your life. You must exchange the pleasing hope of a blessed immortality for sharp self-condemnation, and a certain fearful looking-for of fiery indignation, to devour the adversaries.

Comparing, therefore, your spiritual with your

temporal interest, you will feel that honesty is always the best policy. And though you see the love of filthy lucre tyrannise to such a degree, "that you may run to and fro through the streets of the city, and seek to find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, yet unseduced by the multitude, you will pity all who prosper by doing wrong to others. Surely," you will say, "they have made their faces harder than a rock. Surely they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God," Jer. v.

Further, if you preside in a family, you will then esteem it a grand branch of your duty to give unto your servants that which is just and equal. You will treat them with gentleness, and not with haughty airs, because entirely dependent. You will prevaricate in no contract made with them, nor withhold their wages when due. You will make conscience of laying no heavier burden on them than they are able to bear, nor exact harder labour. In case of slight faults, you will not fly upon them in great wrath, galling them with abuse, or provoking them by threats; or, when you observe them diligent and faithful in your service, be backward to give them suitable encouragement. And you will abhor that indelible reproach to a civilized, much more a Christian country, the custom of abandoning your servants in time of their sickness, rather than bear the charge of their cure; turning them out of your house, unable to work, without money, without friends, when their condition loudly calls for medicine, attendance, and bowels of compassion.

The command of your God, respecting the justice, due from masters to their servants, is express. He has taken care to procure for them a very tender regard, wherever his own authority is respected. "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is

poor and needy, lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be sin unto thee," Deut. xxiv. You are assured that God, a loving Father, equally resents the wrong done to any of his offspring, and with him is no respect of persons.

Thus instructed, you will look upon your servants in a light very different from what is common; and watch against your own selfish tempers, and repress the first emotions of a shure angry spirit, which would vent itself upon those who must bear with your humours. You will reason as Job of old, "If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or my maid-servant, when they contended with me;" if, in my matter of debate betwixt myself and them, I condemn and accused them, without regard to justice, or treated them harshly, because in my power, "What shall I then do when God riseth up? And when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he who made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?" Job xxxi.

So essential to a real Christian is this just behaviour towards his servants, that whoever violates it, does but expose his faith to derision, by pretending to religion. Can any thing be more nauseous than to profess yourself a follower of the meek, patient, loving Saviour, when you are as a lion in your house, and frantic over your servants? One of the most afflicting objects on the earth, more so than a leper covered with sores, or a paralytic half dead, is a selfish passionate master of a family, calling himself a religious man, or valuing himself on a fancied relation to Christ. For every servant in his house, and all who observe his carriage towards them, will be led both to loathe and to revile the religion they see joined with such hypocrisy. From regard, therefore to the name and gospel of Christ, that it may not through you be blasphemed, no less than

from love to him, you O Christian, will give *no occasion* to your servants to complain of your evil tempers.

But if, instead of authority, the all-wise God has chosen for you the place of subjection, that of an apprentice or servant, you will do justly; neither wasting or embezzling your master's money, goods, or provisions yourself, nor basely conniving at others who are wicked enough to do so. You will not give away to people about the house what is not yours to give, nor be idle nor slothful in their absence who employ you, but consult the interest of your master, in some sense, as if it was your own.

The motives which will influence you as a Christian to do so much more in this case than is common, are peculiar and powerful. You will act thus, from a desire to be approved of God, though no one besides himself observe you, and from an invincible resolution not to disgrace a religious profession, or bring reproach upon that gospel which you prize. In this substantial manner, you will prove your faith is more than a barren notion; that it makes you in a servant, the confidence your master can place worthy of all and preserves you from falling into those lies, those mean and base practices so often found amongst servants. This conscientious integrity you will esteem as the grand appeal, to all who have no faith themselves, of its divine power, judging that the whole family will certainly, and justly too, make a mock of your religion, however devout you may appear, if you should be found idle, pilfering, or not to be trusted in the dark. A mock of your religion, no less than if you were detected in the lowdest practices, or enslaved by the love of liquor; for one kind of immorality is as contrary to true religion as another.

Much opposition and bitter hatred you will pro-

bably raise against you from your dishonest fellow-servants, which you will be able to endure, assured that in well-doing God will provide for you, and of him you shall receive the reward of an eternal inheritance; for though the value of your services be low in the judgment of the world, they, like the widow's mite, are as much in the sight of God as the greater deeds of men in high employments. Since, when there is a willing mind, he accepteth according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.

But less such promises should not prove sufficient to secure inviolable this justice due to your master, the word of God declares no fraud, however common, or slightly thought of, either in purloining or wasting things, or neglecting your master's business, if persisted in, will be overlooked. "Every one that doth wrong shall receive for the wrong that he doth, whether rich or poor, master or servant."

Another important instance and act of justice, observed by every real Christian, is the payment of those customs enacted by law, and from thence our earthly sovereign's right, as they are absolutely needful to defray the high charges of government, and procure our defence. The divine command adds a sanction to this law. "Give tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom is due." This command was honoured by the obedience of our Redeemer, who had neither silver nor gold. He wrought a miracle to pay the tribute demanded of him, and his poor disciple. He did this, to discountenance the vile iniquity of defrauding the king's exchequer.

You cannot, therefore, without renouncing subjection to Christ, attempt either to bribe the king's officer to betray their trust, or contrive to deceive their utmost vigilance. Besides, this practice of

smuggling not only defrauds the public treasury, it also injures honest tradesmen, and encourages an infamous set of men to get their livelihood in defiance of the law; men who spend all they earn by iniquity, in drunkenness and lewdness; often a terror to the neighbourhood, till, increasing in villany, the halter ends their shameful course. An accessory to all this guilt, and a sharer in it, you become as soon as you deal with a smuggler.

The last instance of justice I shall insist on, is that of restitution to all wilfully injured by you, either in soul, body, estate, or character. Have you led a friend or acquaintance into pernicious errors in religion, or tempted them to sinful compliances? The first step you will necessarily take, after you have believed and repented yourself, will be, to take your companions in iniquity, as far as you are able, sensible of their condition. Have you defrauded any one? Like Zaccheus, you will make ample restitution, esteeming it base and scandalous, provoking before God and men, to live yourself in affluence, whilst others suffer through your former injustice. No evidence can you give of faith and repentance, but what must be deceitful, if you can fatten on the spoils of which you have defrauded your neighbour.

Further, as a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, if, from private resentment, violent passion, or licentiousness of speech, you have invented or propagated a falsehood to the injury of your neighbour, you will think it a part of justice to make a particular retraction of the falsehood you advanced, and openly acknowledge the particular aggravations with which you have enlarged. For though pointing out the truth in this matter may be prejudicial to your own reputation, and some, instead of commending your honesty, may abate of the esteem they at present have for your name, this

esteem belongs not to you in the measure you possess it. You must consider the right the person you have injured has to be esteemed what he is, and not what you have falsely described him; and you must tell the whole truth, though you expose yourself. Mortifying as this procedure appears, it is absolutely necessary, and the only sure proof you detest the falsehood and licentiousness of your tongue.



## SUNDAY XXX.

### CHAP. XXX.

On the Tempers of a Christian towards his Fellow-creatures.

**SINCERITY** and love of justice, in the extent above described, though the perfection of morality (as too many understand that term), are only two considerable branches which grow from faith in Christ. Where this lives in the heart, negative righteousness towards men will never be deemed sufficient, nor can a Christian rest satisfied with a base freedom from the offence of wilfully injuring or deceiving his fellow-creatures. To the conscientious observance of sincerity and justice, you will add the love of mercy. When Providence places the miserable before your eyes, as it did of old the wounded traveller before the priest and Levite, you will not pass them by, but be moved to have compassion on them. Disease and pain of body, trouble of mind, pinching poverty, hard and cruel usage from men, and even ruin incurred by a profligate life, will excite in you grief and active pity. If you have much, like Job, you will, in the distribution of

your bounty, be eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the afflicted. The blessing of him that was ready to perish will daily come upon you, and you will make the widow's heart leap for joy.

If your scanty lot can enable you to *give* but very little, your heart will be large, friendly, and charitable, as if you had wealth to supply the wants of all in need. Though you have no bread of your own to deal to the hungry, neither know a man of affluence whom you can ask to relieve them, one way still remains to give vent to your merciful temper, a way pleasing to God, and profitable to men; you make your intercession with the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation, to support them under the pressure of their troubles, in due time to deliver them, and make affliction a sovereign medicine to heal their souls.

In this way the rich and poor meet together, nor has any one pre-eminence, in a merciful, benevolent spirit, above the other.

Further, you will exercise mercy, if you are a real Christian, towards those who are in your power from injuries they have done to you, or debts for which they must answer. In such cases, where mercy to the offender will not prove injustice and cruelty to the public, you will wave the rigorous execution of the law, and without exception, where not idleness and vice, but the appointment of Providence, has disabled those indebted to you from answering your demands, you will abhor the thought of adding affliction to him whom God hath wounded. You will reject with indignation the common maxim, that you are to have some sort of satisfaction for your debt, by making the man who brings a loss upon you rot in a jail. From the same merciful temper, in every instance where the innocent must be deeply involved with the guilty, you will

sooner suffer yourself than bring many, for the fault of one, into great distress, by taking away the support of a whole family.

Besides these cases, there is one grand province in which a Christian's merciful temper shines with the greatest lustre; I mean, in tenderly regarding the spiritual miseries and dangers of the human race. It is, I confess, generous and noble to alleviate and remove the sufferings of the body, and to take a pleasure in doing good to them who are in adversity by liberal gifts. Yet how limited, how partial, how transient are the benefits! What can alms avail to comfort, where every distemper of the mind still rages? Pride, envy, hatred, wrath, malice, strife, or filthy lewdness in families, destroy all good, all enjoyment of comfort. You relieve the family day by day, but the husband abuses his wife, beats and terrifies his poor children; or the proud imperious wife vexes to death her husband, driving him into drunkenness as a refuge from her assaults; or the children, after the bad examples they see at home, grow in wickedness as in stature, to do mischief, and increase the guilt and wickedness of the world by their evil tempers. In every station and walk of life, immortal souls are provoking their adorable Maker and Benefactor to jealousy, spurning at his counsel and his salvation, and heaping up wrath against the day of wrath. These are the great objects which, louder than even widows or orphans, call for bowels of mercies, and the most active exertions of our pity.

If you are a Christian in truth, you will say, "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because men kept not thy law." This compassion to the souls of men will inspire you with zeal to save them from impending ruin. You will watch for opportunities to do good by sound arguments and winning persuasions, by faithful and strong declarations of the

evil of sin and its consequences, where there is an ear to hear, and a lucid interval in the midst of the wicked; by distributing heart-searching books, and aiding those who are engaged \* in the delightful work of spreading the knowledge of Christ.

The causes which excite and maintain in the Christian a temper, so extensively merciful, are, reverence of his Maker's command, trust in his promises, a sense of his redemption by Christ, and the agency of the Holy Ghost on his heart.

The command of God to shew mercy is most frequent. "If there be among you a poor man, one of thy brethren, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother, but thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him. Beware that thine eye be not evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him," Deut. xv. 7. In every definition of right behaviour, a merciful temper bears a chief part. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Mic. vi. In this estimate, pure and undefiled religion manifests its efficacy "in visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and in keeping the soul unspotted from the world." No duty is more frequently urged than this. "Be ye there-

\* There are two venerable societies engaged in the glorious work of distributing Bibles, Testaments, and other good books. These societies are supported by subscription; and a guinea or two annually subscribed, is often productive of present peace and eternal salvation to the souls of men. To the first of these societies you may apply through the Reverend Mr. Broughton, secretary to the society for promoting Christian Knowledge among the poor. To the other, called, The society for promoting Religious Knowledge among the poor, you may apply through the Reverend Dr. Stennet, London.

fore merciful, as your heavenly Father is also merciful," Luke vi. 3. 6. "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another," 1 Pet. iii. These commands prove, no one destitute of a merciful temper can be acceptable to God.

Again, his repeated promises invite and encourage the Christian to abound in acts of mercy. For though these promises imply no worth in a merciful temper, when it subsists with love to sin, or prejudice against the glory of Christ; though these promises are not to be construed as if a merciful temper would be rewarded in derogation to faith in the Redeemer, or cover our iniquities, still they are of great use to remove objections made by our worldly hearts, if not by those around us, against doing liberally for the poor and needy. They fully assure us that all acts of beneficence, springing from faith and love to God, are highly pleasing to him, and, through his own amazing grace, shall be honoured with an everlasting reward. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," Matth. 5. "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins," James v. 20. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," John xiii. Above all, the Redeemer will proclaim his high delight in this excellent temper, from his throne and glory, in the presence of the whole human and angelic race. Then will he reward every Christian exercise of mercy, as if it had been conferred on himself; as if the afflictions it relieved had been sustained in his person, and he *only* had received benefit and consolation from the mercy. "In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," Matth. xxv. 40.

Beyond the force even of this affecting declaration is the sense you have, O Christian, of your own redemption by the blood shed on the cross. You remember your apostacy from God is such, and such has been your practice, that had God destroyed you both body and soul in hell, it would have been no more than your desert. Instead of this insupportable doom, you, O Christian, know that God commendeth his love towards you, that whilst you were yet a sinner, Christ died for you: an instance of mercy in itself, and its beneficial efficacy, absolutely without a parallel. This is the only foundation of your peace and hope; it is all your salvation, and all your desire. By living in a constant view of this matchless grace, which has reconciled you to God, and made you his heir, the love of Christ will constrain you; with pleasing energy it will engage you in an uniform intercourse of brotherly kindness and charity. A delightful emotion of mind, peculiar to the faithful in Christ Jesus, will lead you, without adverting immediately either to the command or promise of God, to this just conclusion, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another," 1 John iv.

Besides these plain commands, precious promises, and the mercy of God manifested in the death of his Son, which, with mutual operation, concur to make the Christian love mercy, the Holy Ghost is given unto him, and dwells in him. By his influence, through the motives and truth contained in the written word, he is delivered from the sway of selfish passions and selfish pursuits. The fruit of that Spirit, which distinguishes at once, and infinitely ennobles every one who belongs to Christ, is love and all goodness.

## SUNDAY XXXI.

## CHAP. XXXI.

The Tempers of a Christian towards his Fellow-creatures.

**T**HOSE which we have already considered as essential are of the active kind ; justice, sincerity and mercy. There are others, no less excellent, of a passive nature. The world we live in abounds with unreasonable and vexatious men ; and our unavoidable connexion with them requires much strength of mind properly to bear their evil tempers. Little self-denial, in general, is requisite to do justly, to speak the truth, or shew mercy, compared with what is necessary to bear, with patience, meekness, and love, the turbulent and litigious, the violent and unjust. Yet a Christian must be *meek*. Trivial injuries, a reproachful word, a small indiscretion, or a casual loss, must not inflame your mind, as is commonly the case with men. Such things you will esteem worthy of a very slight notice. Nay, supposing some great provocation is offered, you will be jealous over your selfish spirit, lest you be overcome by ill-usage ; lest the sin of others should cause you to grieve the Spirit of God, to bring guilt upon your souls, and dishonour upon your profession. Even when you are so materially injured that you have a right to seek redress, you will do it with meekness ; first using every mild method to bring your adversary to reason. You will try arguments before punishment, conference before law, and private persuasions before you seek redress in a court of justice ; or if you are compelled to have recourse to this last remedy, you will refrain from passionate

exclamations and bitter reflections against your enemies.

Further, you must shew a meek spirit in carefully avoiding any just cause of offence to others. For this excellent temper does not more effectually support under provocations, than enable men to deny their own inclinations, rather than give uneasiness. It will make you cautious, that neither your actions, or words are unbecoming. You will be civil and respectful, honouring all men, never loud and overbearing in company. Instead of rage and bitterness against those who are seduced to depart from the apostles' doctrine, you will seek their recovery by calmly producing the abounding evidences for the truth, and by cordially praying they may perceive their force. You will never cover private resentment with the venerable name of zeal for God's glory, and the good of souls. You will not think contempt of your erring brother, or passion, pleasing to God, or in any degree justifiable. Though it be common to vent our rage against infidels and heretics, who are doubtless very hurtful members of society, yet the divine command is, "In meekness instruct those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth."

The peculiar motives which excite and support the exercise of this extensive meekness are such as philosophers of old, and their unbelieving successors in our time, know nothing of, though there has been often, in both, a great resemblance of meekness. You will not be meek from love of ease, leading you to submit to the ill-humours of other men, rather than bear the trouble of contention. This often gains the credit of great sweetness of temper. Nor will you be meek from any proud disdain of appearing to be hurt by the perverseness or malice

of your enemies, which would (you think) betray the weakness of your own mind; but because the will of God concerning you is, "Be no brawler, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men," Tit. iii. "Put off anger, wrath, hatred, variance, emulation, strife, and put on kindness, meekness and long-suffering." Your Saviour, from whom you have received all your peace and hope, severely checks every sallie of passion. His words on this subject are alarming to the last degree: "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause" (through heat of temper), "shall be in danger of the judgment" (shall fall under the displeasure of God): "and whosoever shall say to him, Raca" (thou worthless fellow, suffering the passion in his mind to vent itself by derision of a creature of God), "shall be in danger of the council" (offends in a higher degree); "*but whosoever shall say thou fool*" (in his wrath, representing him not only as fit to be despised, but abhorred), "*he shall be in danger of hell fire.*" Awful guard of meekness, intended to keep us at a distance from sour angry passions, the bane of domestic comfort, the cause of unspeakable mischief amongst men, and one of the chief enemies to the soul.

Besides the *command of God* to be meek, such honour is put upon this temper, as must make every Christian ambitious to possess it. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." The meek are blessed, and the inheritance of the Lord promised to them; meekness is distinguished as the principal ornament of a Christian, "and of great price in the sight of God."

Added to all these motives, there is one still more powerful with every Christian; the astonishing meekness of the Author of his salvation. The inspired writers, after our Lord's ascension, always

fix our attention upon him in his low estate, in order to make sinful anger appear without excuse. "Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice : and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was guilt found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that he might bring us to God." Behold the grandest inducement imaginable to be meek; reconciliation with God, and justification unto eternal life, by the meek, patient suffering of the Lamb. I must go, therefore, says a Christian, and do likewise; for every one that abideth in him must himself also so walk, even as he walked.

Added to these mighty motives, what has passed in the breast of a real Christian effectually inclines him to be meek. For self-abasement and shame for sin are inseparable from faith in Christ and true repentance. But a self-abased sinner can easily bear with temper those provocations which set the haughty and self-admiring all in a flame. Enormous criminals, when they see themselves as they are, feel no resentment at whatever is said of them, or done to them. It is what we deserve, they cry, sighing at the remembrance of their offence. The same just sentiment, when you have been humbled for your sins before God, will rise in your mind under provocation to wrath. Far worse treatment do I deserve, you will say, and a severer trial of my patience.

This argument, against every violation of meekness, St. Paul urges, founding his exhortation wholly

on the sinful state in which we are all naturally, as every believer in Christ well knows. "Put them in mind," says he, "to be gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another."

As you advance in the knowledge and practice of religion, fresh evidences of your own corruption will discover themselves in your heart, and prove so many repeated admonitions to pray for and exercise meekness, sensible with what long-suffering God endures the multitude of your own failings. For though the dominion of sin is destroyed, the struggle between flesh and spirit still remains, consequently sufficient matter for self-abasement, so long as you live.



## SUNDAY XXXII.

### CHAP. XXXII.

The Tempers of a Christian towards his Fellow-creatures.

**T**O judge charitably of the actions, characters, and intentions of men, is the temper of a Christian; I mean, when they are not evidently such as stand condemned in the word of God, and expose us to his wrath. It is no charitable judgment to leave drunkards, liars, fornicators, the dishonest, the proud, or self-righteous, when their lives or principles are notorious, *to flatter themselves* they shall escape. It is taking part against them with their great adversary the devil, and giving our aid to delude their

souls, till they are lost for ever. But setting aside these instances, as sins which go before men to judgment, there are many actions and characters of a doubtful aspect. Here only is room for the exercise of charitable judgment; and in these cases, O Christian, you will be careful not to surmise evil, or condemn men, when no sufficient light appears to justify a peremptory sentence. Thus in quarrels amongst relations, and contests about matters of property, violent accusations are common from both sides, which have no foundation. The parties are apt to give very seducing misrepresentations of the fact, which few can know: therefore we are bound to suspend our judgment, and receive no ill impressions from common fame.

With regard to the characters of men also, you will be charitable in your judgment. The commission of a single crime, contrary to the tenor of the delinquent's life, you will not cruelly construe into an impeachment of his sincerity. You will not brand one man as an incorrigible villain, because he was once guilty of a dishonest action towards yourself; or publish another to the world as a mere hypocrite in religion, because you have once detected him in doing evil. You will not immediately, as is the way of the prejudiced, cry out, that, with such, all pretention to conscience is only a cloak to cover bad designs, and a snare to entrap the simple. You will remember, on the contrary, how often violent temptation, suited to your constitutional sin, has been too mighty, and overcome you, or brought you near the very point of yielding. You will call to mind that the best of men, cannonized as saints by God himself, did not persevere in the path of duty without a fall. They were overtaken with a fault, though they soon recovered, and persevered to the end. You will acknowledge it very possible for such

as we are, in our best estate, to offend contrary to habitual practice and acknowledged duty.

Fair evidences of repentance will therefore induce you to pass a favourable judgment on those who have dishonoured their profession. You will readily conclude, that inward shame, and secret sorrow for their fall, has exceeded the reproach which their backslidings have brought upon them.

With regard to the intentions of men, as they can be known only to God, you will impute no evil where it is not manifest; but resist injurious surmises, that such and such things spring from a bad design, when you have no proof to ascertain the charge.

In these, and similar cases, you will exercise a charitable judgment, because the command of your God and Saviour, that you should do so, is plain and awful. "Judge not (where the law of God is silent, or where you can have no competent knowledge), that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again," Matth. vii.

Your obedience to this command will appear most reasonable, and be made easy by the witness in your own heart. You are conscious how often you have acted uprightly, yet been charged with evil intentions. Your conduct has often been cruelly misconstrued, often unjustly condemned. You remember also that you have done what you ought not, promised and vowed you would not; that many prayers, much watching, and obstinate contention have been scarcely sufficient, with the help of God, to get the victory over your own wickedness. You know, that when you fell, the fall was instantly lamented, and, though wounded grievously, you renewed the combat, grappling with your foe, as for

your life, till you was conqueror. You will feel, therefore, for others in the same situation you were once yourself; assured that men may really design nothing but the glory of God, and good-will to men, notwithstanding they are betrayed into breach of duty.

Such sentiments, deeply impressed on your own heart, will form in you a habit of judging your fellow-creatures with tenderness and mercy.

Connected with candour towards all, you as a Christian must exercise forgiveness and love to your enemies. Your behaviour under provocations must be contrary to custom, and the violent impulse of corrupt nature. Is your character basely reviled? You will refute the malicious slander, should it need an answer, without returning abuse for abuse. Should your foes proceed from ill-language to ill-usage, you will still forgive, and prove the reality of your good-will towards them, by pitying them in their distress, and serving them as occasion offers. In some cases, grievous wrongs may be done to you, such as demand redress by law; you will use the remedy without animosity to those who have forced you to take this method of obtaining your right.

Further, should the providence of God leave you in the power of his enemies, as well as your own, who are determined, unless you will renounce the truth, to persecute you even unto death, such efficacy flows from your faith, that you will feel good-will towards those who seek your destruction. You will pray for them to God, before whom it is equally dangerous and impious to dissemble; you will entreat him to give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth, pardon their sin, and bring them to heaven.

Thus complete is the forgiveness and love a Chris-

tian exercises towards those who hate and injure him.

The reasonableness of this temper is proved, and the practice enforced, by the most cogent arguments,

Your knowledge of God in his government of the world condemns all hatred even of your bitterest foes. What manner of affronts and insults does he daily receive? Consider the condition and the obligations the persons are under to him, when they offer them; call to mind the glory of his majesty, the ample means he hath in his power instantly to avenge his own injured name, by consuming his daring adversaries in a moment. At the same time you see him slow to anger, and of great mercy, waiting for many years in deep compassion towards them, who hate his government and his truth.

Every Christian considers this adorable goodness of God conspicuous in his government of the world, and sees it shine with the brightest glory in the redemption of men. By frequent and serious meditation on this fact, you will reason thus with yourself; Had God dealt with his enemies, as I am prompted to do with mine, had he been wanting in mercy, or chosen to take vengeance, what had become of us all; of a world in arms against him? Had God loved none but those who first loved him, or waited to give his inestimable blessings till we had made an advance to obtain mercy, where had been the means of grace, where the glad tidings of salvation? He, on the contrary, commendeth his love to us, that, when we were yet enemies, Christ died for us. How inexcusable then, and desperately wicked must it be in me, to be wrath with a fellow-sinner, since God has so much compassion on us all?

The force of this motive is also considerably increased by your experience of God's tender mercy

to your own soul. You remember, O Christian, how long you lived in forgetfulness and contempt of God, as if you had been independent of him, or he unworthy of your notice; how long you was engrossed by mean and selfish pursuits, never inquiring, where is God my maker? Yet you know he suffered you to survive all this insolence of behaviour towards him. In the midst of it all, his mercy was not withheld from you; he still protected, still provided for you, and preserved you from perishing for ever in your sins. At length he crowned his mercy towards you, by giving you repentance and remission of sin through faith in Jesus Christ. This very gracious and long indulgence from your heavenly Father towards you, lays bare the hideous deformity of a vindictive spirit. Compared with the treatment you have received, what a return to repay your enemies hatred for their ill-will? This contrast, where any sense of right and wrong remains, is insupportable to the mind. Though violent provocations, therefore, may suddenly kindle sparks of resentment in your breast, and prompt you to gratify the impulse of your selfish nature, very soon a recollection of God's patience and love towards yourself, will make the transient thought of revenge appear full of injustice, weakness, ingratitude to God, and a denial of your sinful state before him. By this means the hell-engendered fire will be presently extinct, and love reign in your heart.

Besides these motives, your firm belief of scripture, O Christian, convinces you that every rising of ill-will towards any man is abominable in God's sight; for you are assured, that whoever harbors hatred in his heart cannot be saved, till that detestable spirit is subdued. It is so highly offensive to God, in such sinful wretches as we are, that it renders us incapable of praying, without increasing

our sin and condemnation. The tongue which holds any correspondence with a heart envenomed by hatred, invokes the curse of God, when it cries, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." The petition, dreadfully inverted, sounds thus in his ears, "Forgive not me my trespasses, as I do not forgive them that trespass against me." And whoever dies in hatred of his foes, will find himself answered according to this true meaning of his prayer: justice he shall have, and not mercy; vengeance, and not compassion.

In so forcible a manner are you taught, O Christian, to forgive and love your enemies. Whilst these arguments prove the reasonableness and indispensable duty of forgiveness, the grace of God is promised, that what is impossible with man may be your constant practice. For though injuries extremely irritate our selfish spirit, whilst we have a high opinion of our own dignity, and imagine we have a right to avenge ourselves; whilst we have never been brought low on our knees, to ask with a broken heart pardon for our faults; yet afterwards, upon receiving a spirit of love, of power, and of a sound mind, we are not soon apt to think ourselves so miserably ill-used; the injuries done us appear small, compared with what we know we deserve, and are accustomed to deprecate; evils which threaten death to the soul. And through a supreme desire to please our Lord by the reasonable sacrifice of so vile a lust, we can do it in his strength.

## SUNDAY XXXIII.

## CHAP. XXXIII.

## Christian Humility.

**T**HE Christian, by continuing in the faith of Christ, and growing in grace, comes at length to prefer every one before himself. This is the crowning excellency in his character, an attainment which not only surpasses all the world judges to be excellent or necessary to salvation, but appears to them big with absurdity. How is it possible, say they, not to perceive a vast difference in the practice and tempers of mankind? But if I am allowed to see this difference in regard to others, can it be wrong to acknowledge as much with regard to myself? What a violence does it offer to my reason, to attempt to persuade me, that a man who loves righteousness, and hates iniquity, is not to prefer himself to the disobedient and lawless?

But let the case be properly stated, and there will appear, I conceive, very sufficient reason for a Christian to take the lowest place.

It is certain then, if you are much advanced in the knowledge and practice of true religion (which is the case supposed), you are very sensible of the corruption of your nature; for nothing but pride, blinding the mind, can prevent this from being felt. It is also certain that you are conscious of much unfaithfulness to the grace received, of very great defects, many sins of omission, much negligence in the service of God, and of a very small measure of those holy tempers which ought to have been improved to a high degree. At the same time, you clearly per-

ceive what excellent advantages you have enjoyed, what peculiar obligations you are under on this account, demanding suitable returns in faith, love and obedience. You remember the alarming calls, the affectionate warnings, which have strongly impressed your heart, the answers given to your prayers, the troubles, the dangers, and the enemies from which you have been delivered, with the peace, comfort, and delightful hope so often refreshing and animating your soul.

In these circumstances, must not every thing which betrays evil concupiscence, inordinate affection, or want of supreme love to God in any instance, afflict and abase you? Such being the case with every humble and advanced Christian, I would now ask, where is the absurdity of concluding each person of this character should judge himself (every thing considered) inferior to all men? Or from the bottom of his heart believe there is not one upon earth who, if blessed with equal advantages, would not have far surpassed his attainments?

The whole difficulty of conceiving that the most excellent in the church of Christ do really entertain such thoughts of themselves, arises from pride natural to the heart, which loves to dwell on any supposed pre-eminence above others, without once considering how much more than others they have been favoured by Providence, or comparing the progress they have made with the means vouchsafed, or the duty they owe. The advanced Christian is of a more reasonable and humble mind. He blushes at his manifold and great defects: having his soul strongly impressed with the rich grace he received, and the excellency of the God he serves, he thinks it is not so with any man beside: the transition then is easy, to prefer every one before himself.

The *command* to do so is plain ; “ In lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves,” Phil. ii. 3. A command expressly enjoined as the only prevention of vain glory. Nor must this command be interpreted only to imply a preference of those who walk worthy of their Christian name, leaving you still at liberty to look down upon open transgressors as worse than yourself. This construction is contrary to a parable our God spoke, on purpose to condemn the sin of valuing ourselves above any one. He sets before us a Pharisee and a publican ; the former is honest, strictly conscientious and devout, virtues which he acknowledges are the gift of God ; he only prefers himself on their account to the adulterers, the unjust and profane. One of them he mentions in his prayer (not from personal aversion) merely because he saw him in the temple\*, and thanks God he was not so base and wicked as this publican. You know the judgment of God in this case. The Pharisee was left in his sins, highly offensive to his Maker, because he exalted himself above the publican. He trusted in himself as righteous, and despised others in comparison of himself ; a full proof, as can be given, that it is the bounden duty of every Christian to take the lowest place.

This example proves, that all who prefer themselves to others in fact adopt the sentiment of the Pharisee, and do just what he did. This instructive parable convinces you, that as there were none in common opinion more wicked than publicans,

\* Observe, there could be nothing wrong in the Pharisee's making mention of the publican's name, unless there was injustice in his preferring himself to him ; since nothing is more plain, than that he might very innocently mention in his prayer what he, at all other times, was allowed to think. But this he was not allowed to do, if he might esteem himself above the publican.

there are none so wicked as to justify your placing yourself above them. Hence you will constantly watch against self-complacency, a subtle enemy to your soul. You will repel its insinuations whenever you see the wickedness, or hear the faults of those around you. You will be jealous lest pride should be fostered by consciousness of what God has done for you, and be afraid of nothing more than the vanity of your own mind; remembering the righteous decree, which truth itself has thrice proclaimed, "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

From the representation now given of a Christian in his tempers towards his fellow-creatures, it is evident that he must prove a blessing to every one about him. Who would not rejoice to have that man for his superior, or relation, his acquaintance, neighbour, or domestic servant, in whom so many excellent qualities unite? who is sincere, just, merciful, meek, candid, benevolent, and ready to forgive every wrong done to him; yet, in the possession of so much substantial goodness, is free from all self-admiration or vanity, amidst the applause he receives; not preferring himself to others, or even thinking he has attained, but pressing forwards, ashamed of his small progress; and, penetrated with a sense of his own vileness, taking the lowest place. What Jewish enmity against Christ, what infernal hatred of righteousness and true holiness must fill the heart, which does not delight in such a character, and extol, as the rich gift of God, that gospel which forms and supports it!

Such is not the ideal picture of what a Christian should be, but the daily life of thousands, and of all who have a scripture title to that highly venerable name. Faith in the Son of God, as their atoning sacrifice, and the Lord their righteousness, through

the influence of the Holy Ghost, produces this divine transformation of soul, this new creation in Christ Jesus.

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## PRAYER,

Suited to the preceding Subject.

WE bless thee, O Lord our God, for all thy loving-kindness to the children of men. We thank thee that we are so strictly charged to abhor all that is hurtful to our fellow-creatures, and practice whatever is beneficial to them. When we call to remembrance the time past, we feel, alas! much cause to be ashamed. Every relation, friend, and neighbour, testify against us. How destitute were we once of all Christian tempers, and how sadly defective in them are we still! We cannot tell how often we have offended against truth, justice, and love, always due from us to our neighbour. We remember these our faults, we are ashamed, and abuse ourselves, and look to our great and merciful High-priest, to obtain our pardon through his blood. Never let us forget how often we have done evil, how often neglected to do good to thy creatures, whom we ought to have loved as we do ourselves. Desirous of offending thee no more, by sinning against our neighbour, we beg thy help to conquer our corruption. May we never more deceive or dissemble; never be injurious to others for filthy lucre sake. In every hour of peculiar temptation to dishonesty, withhold us from doing evil. Open our eyes to see so clearly that it will provoke thy displeasure, and ruin our souls, that we may be ever kept from being unrighteous, either in a great matter or a small. May all who live with us be witnesses to

our integrity. To integrity may we add brotherly kindness and charity ; be glad to contribute to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, to instruct the ignorant, give protection to the injured, and deliverance to those oppressed with wrong. Above all, may our bowels yearn over those who are ready to perish ; may we watch for opportunities to do good to their souls, and fervently commend them to thy mercy.

Form and fashion us to exercise charity in judging of the characters of men. Help here, Lord, with all might ; O quench that hellish fire within, which inflames our tongues with bitterness. Deliver us from that hypocrisy, which instantly takes great offence at the mote in our brother's eye, whilst the beam is in our own. By thy almighty grace save us from this hateful spirit. Make us kind, tender-hearted, and very pitiful. Set before us the example of the meek and lowly Jesus, that we may be ashamed of peevishness and passion ; that we may be galled with self-reproach, and confess how much we grieve the Spirit of God, when our actions, words, or looks, are not governed by the law of kindness.

Whatever we suffer from the contempt, hatred, or malice of men, may we, through the help of our God, bear it with patience, and return good for evil. What is impossible with men, enable us to do, through the knowledge of Christ, crucified for his enemies, and praying for his murderers. And after we have persevered in the constant observance of truth and justice, in the exercise of meekness, mercy, and love to all men, O may we be found clothed with humility ; may we take the lowest place, and esteem every one better than ourselves.

Thus, as trees of righteousness of the Lord's plant-

ing, may we bring forth every good fruit, that men, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in Heaven. Grant these our requests, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer. *Amen.*

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## SUNDAY XXXIV.

### CHAP. XXXIV.

The Duty of a Christian in a married State.

**WE** have taken a view of the Christian in those tempers which he bears towards all mankind, sincerity, justice, mercy, meekness, candour, love, and humility. We proceed to consider him in the discharge of duties which he owes from a peculiar nearness of relation, in the married state, and with respect to his kindred and servants. These connexions are ordained by divine Providence, in order that a mutual observation of the duties arising from them might prove a source of greater comfort than could otherwise be enjoyed.

In each of these relations the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is of singular advantage, not only by pointing out the extent of each relative duty with more clearness, but by making a violation of it appear more criminal than it ever does to men ignorant of Christian principles.

With regard to the married state, the mutual duties of husbands and wives are fidelity and love; the distinct support and government on the husband's part; on the wife's, assistance and obedience.

Fidelity to the marriage-bed is equally bound on

both parties by the marriage-covenant; because, by this union, they become each others property; so that, if either yield to the embraces of another, the covenant is annulled, a divorce ought to follow, and the high displeasure of God is incurred; "For whoremongers and adulterers he will judge."

In the eyes of all, therefore, who revere the authority of God, lewdness in the marriage-state is a crime of great enormity. So far must Christian husbands and wives be from injuring each other by defiling the marriage-bed, that they must be free from every thing in their air, dress, or discourse which savours of wantonness, or would encourage loose desires. Whatever has this tendency, however fashionable, they will shun as of hateful tendency, contrary to the marriage-contract. In their judgment it will be no sufficient observation of conjugal fidelity barely to abstain from adulterous commerce; they must maintain a purity of heart, and detest what betrays the want of it, foolish jesting.

Nothing less than this is required on the man's part to keep his marriage vow inviolate; and on the woman's, to shew a chaste conversation, a duty equally incumbent on both: and for either to transgress here, is to despise the plain command of God, and his benevolent, everlasting ordinance.

To fidelity must be added mutual love, for love is the life of marriage, without which it differs as much from the comfortable society our gracious God intended to establish by it, as servitude from freedom. When this union was first made in paradise, it was immediately declared, that as soon as ever the bonds of marriage took place amongst the posterities of Adam, they should prove stronger than the bonds of nature: "A man shall forsake even his father and mother, and cleave to his wife." Like

the two pieces of wood which God commands Ezekiel to join together, and they became one in his hand. Ezekiel xxxvii. So marriage was ordained as an including rind, to make of two persons one flesh; from which union there ought to flow a constant circulation of kind offices and endearing attentions, as the vital juices flow through the natural body; consequently husbands and wives, though blameless in point of conjugal fidelity, are still very guilty, if they live in indifference towards each other. A failure in point of affection does not, it is granted, break the marriage bond, as adultery; yet it defeats one principal end of its institution: for it was designed to unite the hearts of the married pair, and to produce a consummate friendship from the pleasing combination of two persons, whose interests are by this means made invariably the same. But, instead of these advantages, want of love in either party perverts the state of marriage into a most grievous burden and bondage.

Great stress is therefore laid upon this matter in the rule of a Christian's duty. Husbands and wives are commanded to shew the most affectionate regard to each other. The precept is immediately addressed to husbands, but it equally applies to wives. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Ephes. v. In this command, observe the quick feeling which every man has of the least hurt done to his body, the constant aversion to every thing which would give it pain, and the incessant desire of its health and comfort, are chosen to represent the strength, delicacy, and perpetuity of conjugal affection.

And as the body partakes no less of your care and

love, on account either of its weakness, deformity, or disease, so no disagreeable qualities or perverse humours on either side can justify the other party in withholding the tribute of love. These faults indeed make it very difficult to behave with proper tenderness, and prove a severe trial of faith and patience, which yet, in the end, will certainly get the victory.

This tender affection is finely taught the husband in the conclusion of the precept, by directing him to copy the love of Christ for his church in his own to his wife. As if it had been said, you abundantly experience the care and affection of your Saviour, and see it exercised over your fellow-Christians; you see how he bears with your infirmities, and with many things in you exceedingly wrong and distasteful to him; yet he grows not cold to your welfare, nor rejects you from among his children. Shew you, therefore, the same tenderness to each other, which the whole church experiences from its head, and never think yourselves at liberty to yield to moroseness, or live without endearing expressions of mutual love.

Further, husbands and wives, who are Christians, must have their affection for each other *spiritual*, both in its foundation and effects. It must not be built chiefly on beauty of person, for this is one of the most fleeting things in nature, and incapable, even whilst it lasts, to maintain its enchanting power. Very often those who come together in rapture, enamoured with each other's form, soon grow cool in their regard, and hate one another as forcibly as they loved at first. Nor can there be any security that this will not sooner or later prove the case, when the cause of affection is so mean and sensual.

But, suppose even good sense, good manners, and a temper formed for friendship, engage the parties

to marry ; even these amiable accomplishments, unless higher considerations concur, leave them in danger of taking great disgust, and living unhappily together. For these accomplishments perfectly coincide with excessive love of pleasure, of the world, of independence. Hence it often comes to pass, that husbands and wives, who have no better foundation of their mutual love than those agreeable qualities by which they were so pleasing to each other on their first intimacy, are very miserable together at last. They find more restraint than they expected, and less entertainment ; they cease studying to please, and evil tempers, before concealed, break out. Especially when misfortune produces a bitter change of condition, frequently the well-bred, sensible, agreeable husband and wife, changes with their circumstances, and grows a peevish, complaining, irksome companion.

The affection of Christian husbands and wives must stand upon a firmer basis. The husband must love his wife, not chiefly for her beauty, manners, or even the affection she bears to him, but as a creature of God, entitled by their union (which is of divine origin) to his tender affection. The Christian wife also must love her husband, not on account of the superiority of his understanding, the applause he receives, the honour of his condition, or the love he has for herself, but in obedience to the will of God, holy, just, and good, which requires her to dwell in love with her husband, with whom she is become one person. Where conjugal affection is not thus secured by conscience towards God, a thousand unforeseen accidents may raise a storm of contention ; and some bitter expressions may escape in the heat of passion, which will eat as does a canker, consuming all enjoyment of the marriage state, if they do not cause an open separation.

Husbands and wives, on the contrary, governed by the authority and love of Christ, will be strongly united in the common source of their felicity, and the object of their highest adoration; for here they find a constant unalterable reason for mutual esteem and love.

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## SUNDAY XXXV.

### CHAP. XXXV.

The Christian's Duty in the marriage State.

**AS** the ground of affection between Christian husbands and wives must be spiritual, so must the expressions and proofs of it. To be solicitous only in procuring a comfortable provision for your wife, that she may not be left destitute or dependent, when your diligence or frugality might prevent it, is the affection every man must feel, who is not sunk beneath a brute. On the other hand, the wife may express love to her husband by a most discreet management of the family, by cheerfully doing her utmost for its welfare, and by studying to make his life and home agreeable, yet be void of the least savour of Christian knowledge. Mutual and earnest endeavours to please each other are often found where the parties do a thousand things in open defiance of God's authority, and, instead of meek remonstrance, or disapproving silence on either side, they remain very well satisfied with each other's conduct. A perfidious sort of love this is, though every where prevalent. A confederacy against the truth and government of God, by which they

strengthen one another in unbelief and profaneness, and are principal instruments of each other's endless misery.

In a manner quite the reverse, will the affection of Christian husbands and wives for each other be discovered. Their spiritual good will be a chief and mutual concern. They will be tender-hearted inspectors of each other's conduct, meekly correcting errors, which unnoticed would have struck root, or pointing out faults before they are confirmed into habits. They will converse together on the power, the glory, the mightiness of God's kingdom, to increase their knowledge of his excellency, and love of his name. They will prompt each other to holy vigilance, and a diligent care and labour to please God, and encourage that sort of acquaintance and intimates, whose principles, sentiments, and tempers, are animating and exemplary. As the nuptial union gives the parties much influence to be either greatly serviceable or hurtful to each other's eternal interests, they must look upon themselves as bound in conscience to use all their weight against the corruptions of the heart, against pride, unbelief, and worldly lusts, through which their salvation is most endangered.

Thus, with unspeakable advantage, Christian husbands and wives prove the spiritual nature of their conjugal affection: sure to find it equally constant in youth and age, sickness and health, indigence or plenty, lasting as their abode together, and redounding to their advancement in eternal glory after death.

True believers in Christ are the only persons capable of dwelling in the mutual exercise of such spiritual and permanent affection; since they only confess their innate depravity, and, under an humbling sense of their vileness, use with success the means of

**grace.** They know how to persevere in importunate prayer for the remission of each other's sins, for daily supplies of strength against temptations, and help under various infirmities. These their devout sentiments and practices prove a fruitful source of mutual endearment; they forcibly impress upon them both the idea that they are connected by nobler ties than those of wedlock, that they are children of one heavenly Father, servants of one gracious Lord, members of his body, and heirs together of the grace of life.

A full persuasion of a common interest in such inestimable privileges is of powerful influence to unite even strangers to each other, at first view, in the bonds of friendship; and can instantly create delight in each other's company and welfare. Judge then the efficacy of this knowledge, when increased and enlivened by daily prayer. It is a prevention of indifference to each other, and both persuades and inclines to love fervently.

We may observe also, that satiety often proves the bane of conjugal affection. The parties grow insipid to each other upon more acquaintance; the husband becomes more reserved, or the wife loses her vivacity; in either case they are weary of each other. But the spiritual life of believers in Jesus prevents this satiety. An infinite grandeur in the objects of their common faith, the importance of their nuptial union with respect to them, joined to mutual desire of obtaining salvation, will not suffer that stagnation to take place in the married state, which otherwise frequently follows.

Further, strife and contention often first cool, and then destroy conjugal affection; but the devout exercises, in which real Christians constantly engage, effectually prevent this melancholy estrangement from each other. Should variance in any de-

gree arise, they are checked, they are sharply upbraided in their own consciences; they have both offended and grieved their best friend: Before his throne of grace they are to appear, where they lament their failings, and beg their trespasses may not be imputed, but forgiven, as they forgive every offence against themselves: Hence they find it easy to make merciful allowances to each other: to divide the blame, instead of placing it all to one side, as pride and self-will prompt men to do, thus inflaming the quarrel. With unfeigned self-abasement they will confess their depravity, from which they are so ready to kindle into rage, where Christian patience would scarcely be moved. By these concessions, contention ceases soon, and from mutual self-condemnation arises a desire of greater vigilance to guard against passion, and more earnest prayer to be kept for the future in harmony and love.

Though the vehement fondness, therefore, for each other, which usually precedes the nuptial union, and flourishes for a time after it, may wear off, yet the married pair, who, in the scripture-phrases, are joined together in the Lord, may be sure a solid tender affection will ever remain; an affection true and refined, sufficient to produce substantial comfort, and ripening more and more as they improve themselves in every divine attainment.

Besides mutual fidelity and love, the common duty of both parties in the conjugal state, there are some offices peculiar to the husband, others to the wife; and the conscientious discharge of these respectively will be strictly regarded by the faithful in Christ Jesus.

The husband's peculiar province is to govern: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church," Ephes. v. When the husband, therefore, ceases to preside, giving up

his authority to the wife, he transgresses no less than a military officer, who should surrender the honour of his command to the impertinent intrusion of his inferior. But then as the head hath no interest distinct from the other parts of the body, nor any advantage over them (unless the care of direction, and providing for them be one), so the husband has no interest separate from his wife. The authority intrusted in his hands by our God is designed for the direction and welfare of the wife; it never, therefore, can be exercised by a husband who fears God, but to this excellent end. Never with arbitrary dominion, as tyrants rule slaves; but with such a benign influence, as the soul exerts over the body: for the command to the Christian church is, "So ought husbands to love their wives, even as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself, for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but loveth it, and nourisheth it, even as the Lord the church." So that the authority lodged with the husband, by being managed according to the appointed order, instead of proving burdensome or uneasy to the wife, shall become a source of greater peace and good to both.

Another peculiar branch of the husband's duty, is to furnish his wife with things necessary and convenient, according to his rank in life. He must express alacrity in letting her share the advantages he possesses, and convince her he receives pleasure in seeing her use, within the limits of Christian moderation, his abundance.

The peculiar duty of the wife, which every real Christian from conscience towards God will observe, is to aid and comfort her husband in the midst of his business and labour. The good management of a family is a thing quite different from making provision for it. The former, in general, depends chiefly upon the wife; the latter is the husband's

province. In this manner the labours of life are divided ; and if either neglect their respective duty, much loss and confusion will follow, which marriage was designed to prevent.

A Christian wife, therefore, will not conform to corrupt custom, and affect to be above the care of her family, as if she was made only to dress, visit, or, like a picture, be admired. She will look well to the ways of her household, and not eat the bread of idleness. She will give her husband a solid testimony of her affection for him, by being careful to see his income, or the fruit of his labour, is not extravagantly consumed for want of female inspection at home.

A second instance of duty peculiar to the wife, is obedience to her husband. When our common mother sinned through vain desire of being as the gods, she not only failed of the very end at which she aimed, but her proud desire of preeminence was made a reason of degrading her. "And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee," Gen. iii. Whenever, therefore, the wife affects to rule, or refuses to submit to the authority of her husband, she resists the ordinance of God ; she exalts herself, in contempt of the divine decree published immediately after Eve's transgression, and confirmed again by the Holy Ghost. "As the church is subject to Christ" (acknowledging and submitting to his authority, though contrary to natural inclination), "so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." In every instance, where the command of the husband does not contradict the command of God, the wife is obliged to comply, and without a murmur give up her own will.

If it be urged, that the wife has frequently more understanding and ability to govern than the husband, and on this account ought to be excused from

living in subjection, the answer is obvious: she hath liberty to use her superior wisdom in giving counsel, and producing such reasons as are proper to correct a mistaken judgment. But if her advice is not accepted, subjection is her duty; for if more than to give advice was allowed on account of greater wisdom, authority would then be founded on superiority of understanding; a notion big with confusion. For suppose a servant, as is often the fact, endued with more capacity, and grace too, than his master, would it not be insufferable insolence, should he urge this as a reason for refusing to be any longer under control, which, on another account, was indisputably his duty, viz. *from his station in life*? An attempt, therefore, to gain the ascendancy is an attempt to subvert the order which the sovereign Giver of all wisdom has appointed. Base return for his bounty! The Christian rule is positive against such an usurping spirit: the command is, "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband." In opposition to natural pride, let her carefully check the first desire to have her own will, and see she be not wanting in submission; for this behaviour is most becoming a woman professing godliness. Let her remember that God, the author of the marriage state, has appointed this subordination.

Such are the excellent tempers which husbands and wives must possess, and the extent of that duty which they must practice.

It often happens that one of the parties is brought to the knowledge of Christ, whilst the other remains in unbelief and bitter prejudice against the life and power of godliness. In this case, much of the comfort the nuptial union should produce must be lost. Here, instead of assisting each other in their noble endeavours to please God, the believing husband or wife will find a severe cross in the idle discourse,

vain company, and low pursuits in which the unbelieving party can only take pleasure. Yet, in this trying situation, the power of faith will display itself to great advantage; it will produce an invincible meekness, and a patient expectation, in love, that God peradventure may give repentance, to the acknowledgment of the truth. It will excite to greater circumspection in behaviour, that the mind disaffected to the truth and service of God may be won over; it will excite frequent and earnest prayer, that, being already united by wedlock, they may become also one spirit in the Lord; a prayer frequently answered.

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## SUNDAY XXXVI.

### CHAP. XXXVI.

The natural Duty of Parents and Children.

**T**HE nearest connexion, after the nuptial union, and often springing from it, is that between parents and their children. From this relation, parents are indispensably obliged to provide for their eternal welfare. And all real Christians will give great attention to this matter. They are required to do so. "These words," saith the Lord, "which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, *Deut. vi.* God established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that

they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." Thus emphatically does scripture enjoin parents to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," as the grand means of preserving the knowledge of God, his works, and truth, amongst men.

This injunction is solemnly acknowledged by the covenant into which Christians enter their children, almost as soon as they are born. In the ordinance of baptism, they vow to educate them in the service, and for the honour of their Maker and Redeemer; or, if they do not answer in person for their children, they choose friends who solemnly engage to join with them in seeing their children properly instructed; and by negligence in doing this duty, a religious rite, which undoubtedly claims God our Saviour for its author, is turned into a worthless ceremony.

Natural affection also must influence to take much pains for the salvation of their children. They know the worth of the immortal soul, otherwise they are not Christians, but infidels. If then they neglect the cultivation of its faculties, desirous only to provide a temporal subsistence, their affection is not rational or Christian; it is no higher than bears and wolves feel for their young. A rational, a Christian love for their children, dictates such sentiments as follow. These tender plants, sprung from ourselves, possess capacities of knowing, serving, loving God, and enjoying the vision of him for ever. If their capacities are not improved to this highest end, their existence, instead of a blessing, will turn out an insupportable curse. Our love for them makes us think no pains or cost too great to heal

them when sick, and provide for their present well-being. But what avails it to secure them (were we able) from the transient evils of sickness, pain, and poverty, if woes of endless duration are to be their final portion? What avails the most ardent affection, which reacheth only to the mortal part, if all that lieth in our power is not done, that, after passing through the present short-lived scene, they may enter eternity in the favour of God?

Where there is any conviction of the certainty of the world to come, a small degree of natural affection will powerfully and constantly suggest thoughts of this kind, and be followed with correspondent care in the education of their offspring. But all Christian parents clearly see the realities of the eternal world, they strongly feel their unspeakable importance; and such love have they to God and man, that, was their power equal to their kind regards, there should not remain upon the earth one rebel against his Maker. They are grieved to see any perishing, whilst Jesus, mighty to save, and merciful to pardon, is ready to receive, with open arms, all who will come to him for life.

With what stronger force must this benevolent spirit work toward their own offspring! How active must they be to secure their spiritual welfare, which, from paternal love, must be their chief concern?

Besides, it is the duty of parents, in the first place, to teach their children the knowledge of God and his word, because they have the charge of forming them, while they are in the fittest state to receive and to retain good impressions. Should they neglect this noble opportunity of seasoning their minds with the truth of divine revelation, so profitable to all men, every future method of instruction, or means of grace, will in general fail of having a

good effect. For children very soon and naturally conclude, that what their parents never mention, or earnestly inculcate, can be of little advantage to them. If they have never been taught to consider the glorious majesty of God, the absolute dependence of every living thing upon him, his rich bounty and mercies towards us all, they will attend public worship in as much ignorance as Pagans bow down before their dumb idols; and with an offensive levity and profaneness, which Pagans do not. What mere babbling also must their prayers in secret be (if they are directed to pray at all), since they have never been instructed in the nature of sin, or the worth of the soul; never been taught to observe how great is human weakness and depravity, on which the need of prayer and divine grace are founded? What an invincible obstacle, humanly speaking, must be found in the hearts of young people against receiving the gospel, where natural ignorance, pride, self-will, and unbelief, have been suffered to strengthen, by their parents' criminal neglect? Nay, even afflictions and misfortunes in the family, the death of dear relations or intimate friends, generally lose their effect, where no care has been taken in the education of children. These awakening calls, sent from God to lead men to repentance, and to consider their transgressions, wherein they have exceeded, make no useful impression on minds never accustomed to advert to God their Maker, Governor, and Judge.

It is true, (adored be his free grace, and the power of his spirit), some children utterly neglected, and even depraved to the last degree by their wicked parents, are daily brought to the knowledge of Christ. Nevertheless, the prevalence of open profaneness, and of senseless formality in religion, may be traced up, as to its springs, in parents utterly neglecting their children, and must be answered for

by them. This suggests another motive, which should engage the study and labour of parents in promoting the salvation of their children. The Lord God takes particular notice of their behaviour in this matter. Hear the high commendation of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God. "The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him." There were many shining excellencies in his character; but God selects that in which he took peculiar delight, naming it, together with a repeated promise of Christ, "That Abraham would, above all things, regard the religious education of his children, and the honour of God in bringing them up for his service."

On the other hand, how very awful is the scripture account of the indignation God manifests against parents who neglect their children. Though Eli was not without the knowledge and fear of God in some measure himself; yet, because his sons made themselves vile, and *he restrained them not*; only mildly reproofing, when he should have rebuked with all authority and severity; only expressing disapprobation, when he should have warned them at their peril to persist in their evil ways, and, upon their obstinate refusal to obey, have executed upon them the law: for this crime, he is first branded as an accessory in their iniquity, "as kicking at the sacrifice of God, and honouring his sons above him." Then a terrible doom is denounced upon his family; they are to be degraded from their most honourable office; they are to be cut off from the altar, and the iniquity of his house is never to be purged. "From them that honour me," saith the

Lord, "I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

From this affecting contrast in the characters of Abraham and of Eli, judge how much parents are concerned diligently to train up their children in the knowledge of God.

Further, the condition in which they are born lays a strong obligation upon parents to do all in their power to promote their salvation. What compassion is due to them! They are born wholly disordered. Do not you see how much grief, anger, and vexation they feel, even in their childhood, from natural stubbornness, passion, envy, pride, and selfishness? Do you not know what these disorders portend; what greater troubles and severer conflicts await them; what frequent and more cutting vexations they are to meet with, unless these violent and baleful passions are subdued? Are you not conscious that the latent seeds of various lust in their hearts will by time and occasion grow up, ripen, and bring forth in abundance every evil work, unless preventive methods are, in childhood, seasonably applied by those who have authority over them? Can you consider all this, and neglect to bring them, in the arms of faith and prayer, to the physician of the soul? Can you be satisfied, nature should have its course without discipline, without laying salutary restraints upon them, without repeating to them a thousand times, in all affection and earnestness, how much they need, and ought to seek, his power and grace, who came to save the lost?

Was a parent to desert his child in a wilderness infested with ravenous beasts, or full of covered pits, when his presence, counsel, and experience might have given protection, would not his barbarity shock every humane mind? But do you, O parent, act in a more tender manner, who leave your child

to walk through a world full of enticing objects, smiling only to enslave, and where subtle malicious foes lie in ambush to destroy? To pass through such a world, without the light of faith, the defence of God, the influence of his Spirit; ignorance of the foundation of justice, truth, sobriety, chastity, and a Christian life; in what strength they must be practised; why so absolutely required, and what irreparable loss follows the violation of these duties to the last. A young man or woman entering upon the stage of life, in ignorance of these things, is as a child deserted by its unnatural parent in the howling desert, and not more likely to escape destruction.

Again, was you, O parent, to abandon your child to poverty, or see him hastening to a jail, and an infamous death, yet use no pains to reclaim him from his courses, how could you excuse your conduct? Be not deceived; you are doing so in effect, whilst you despise their souls, and neglect deeply to impress them with a sense of their duty. For go now, and ask confined debtors what deprived them of sweet liberty, their family and society of their labours (a few cases only excepted), the answer from that place of wretchedness would be this: No cruel rigour of our creditors, or losses unavoidable, but headstrong passions, unchecked by the fear of God, which was never instilled in our childhood, brought us to this shameful house of our prison. Our parents were first accessory to our ruin. Some of them have lived to see it, and been tortured by self-accusation on our account. Amidst all other instances of their love for us, the grand one was still wanting; they took no pains to give conscience authority, by teaching us God's work. This would have made us tremble at those sins, which have destroyed our peace, our character, our substance, and leave us no hope of a better condition in the world to come, than we have in this.

Consider, O parents, with yourselves, how would you be able to bear such a charge from them, who were intrusted of God to your care, that you might early instil into their minds the principles of the Christian faith, and guide them into the paths of righteousness.

But should there be parents so hardened in profane principles, as not to regard what becomes of their offspring after death, provided they prosper in this world, let them hear once more (whether they will believe it or no), the day is coming, when they must see their relation to their children was constituted for much higher ends than to secure them any worldly advantages, or to keep them from poverty and want. Then, what agony will be felt, when children call out for justice on their infidel parents, imputing, in some measure, to their cruelty, the everlasting miseries which are come upon them? They kept the dreadful danger out of sight, they suffered their passions to rule, they joined in extolling pleasure, riches, honour, and power; but never exposed the mischief, infamy, and ruin, inseparable from obstinate disobedience to God. How insufferable the anguish, when children, with bitter imprecations, will rage against their father and mother, and curse the day in which they were born to them; born finally to aggravate their misery, by perishing all together!

The united force of these various obligations and heart-affecting considerations should make all Christian parents do what lies in their power to prepare their offspring to receive the truth of God, in the use of those methods on which they may expect his blessing.

## SUNDAY XXXVII.

## CHAP. XXXVII.

The same Subject continued.

**T**HE duty of all Christian parents to instruct their children in the knowledge of God has been laid before you. But as the capacities of men differ no less than their condition, it is accordingly the duty of some, and what will undoubtedly be required at their hands, to bestow more time and pains on this matter than others are capable of doing, though ever so desirous.

Poor people will discharge their duty to their children by correcting them, from their infancy, for stubbornness and quarrelling, for lying, using bad words, for pilfering in the least degree, and for every mark of a *cruel* disposition; by frequently telling them, it is a good and gracious God who gives their parents strength to earn food for them; that his eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, that he may give to every one according to his doings, when he shall judge the world; that this glorious God will ever love, bless, and comfort those who fear and love him, and their fellow creatures; but will punish, with inconceivable pains, all the ungodly, for doing the things, and living in the tempers, which he hates, and hath forbidden.

Every poor day-labourer, who loves God, has it farther in his power to teach his children to pray morning and evening; to tell them the Bible is the word of God, which must judge them, and all Christians, and which they must obey and love; to carry them to church on the Lord's day, and keep them from

profaning it. When these things are enforced by good example, there is little doubt but the children of the poor will, in general, be much restrained; they will have a conscience well informed, and tread in the steps of their poor, but right honourable parents; and where so little time can be spared from hard and continual labour, and the understanding be so little improved, this, I apprehend, may be esteemed a full discharge of their duty towards their children, whilst they are very young.

When years have ripened their minds, all who believe in Jesus, however poor, will be able to enlarge their instructions which they give to them: they will assure them, their own consciences never were purged from guilt, till they depended on the atonement made on the cross, and pleaded that alone for their pardon before God; that they have obtained victory over their own wickedness, and violent tempers, in his strength and power; that they have been preserved in much peace from worldly fears and anxiety for their bread, by seeking, in the first place, the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and by casting all their care upon him.

In the middle ranks of life, a better education qualifies parents to go much beyond the poor in this important matter. Such persons, therefore, must not only use the methods of instruction above mentioned to form in their children a love for truth, justice, and mercy, a desire to serve and please God, but study to make divine knowledge pleasant to them. This may be done with great success by using not books *so much* as outward objects and particular occurrences, which will give a body and substance to religious truths; and, by proper attention, a most agreeable variety of instances may be chosen, which will take in the several grand branches of divine knowledge.

To explain my idea at large; the first thing in which all children should be thoroughly instructed is, that God is good and gracious, and the earth full of his goodness. To imprint deeply this delightful truth, point out to them, in the spring, the whole country arrayed in beauty, and covered with the bounty of God: tell them, they are *his* clouds which drop fatness; that it is *his* sun which imparts genial warmth to make the ground produce its fruits; that he causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, and giveth bread to strengthen man's heart, and oil and wine to make him of a cheerful countenance: tell them, that could they see the vast extent of divine goodness, they would see innumerable myriads in heaven above, in the earth beneath, in the waters under the earth, all sustained by him alone. In autumn, when the fields are filled with standing sheaves of corn, and trees bend under their load of fruit, draw aside the veil of ignorance, and fix their attention upon God, the invisible, yet sole Author of all the plenty around them.

In winter, frequent opportunities occur of bringing the elements to bear witness to their Maker's glory. When frost hardens the earth as iron, and congeals the flowing stream into solid ice, shew your children how passive the whole creation lies in the hand of its Maker. When the intense cold is distressing, and icy particles, like darts, pain our frail body, that we are scarcely able to stand before them, point out the sudden change of the scene; in an instant "he bloweth with his wind, and the waters flow again." And when his snow covers the face of the earth, and seals men up in their dwelling; lead them to observe how suddenly at his word it dissolves, having answered the benevolent purpose for which it was sent. Pursuing the same method, when you have told your children of the exceeding

great power of God, and what a dreadful thing it is to fall into his hands, repeat the salutary instruction when his thunder has shaken your dwelling, and the arrows of his lightning have passed before their eyes, or when his tempestuous wind has left in the neighbourhood some traces of its rage. *Then is the time*, with a pleasing, yet solemn air, to assure them that fire and vapour, snow and hail, storm and tempest, wild as they seem to us, move only as God appoints their course, with more exactness than the best trained troops obey the signal of their commander; that though the earth should be moved, and the hills be carried into the midst of the sea, the Lord of Hosts is with his obedient people, the God of Jacob is their refuge.

Thus, by pointing out to your children the invisible God, working in all these most sensible changes, and furnishing their minds with sublime scriptures, in which he asserts his own immediate absolute dominion over fire and water, earth and air, men and angels, you will make *his creation* the great book of instruction. By this method of teaching, the truth has a body and a substance. And though they would feel it an irksome task to get a catechism by heart, and would yawn over a mere lesson in divinity, they will clearly apprehend, and hear with entertainment, a description of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, exemplified before their eyes. Lectures of this kind, repeated not too frequently, (lest they should surfeit children, a thing greatly to be guarded against), but at such intervals as these various appearances occur, will early form your children to adore their great Creator, and impress them with a sense of his presence and agency in every place. Thus, in the most rational manner, and in obedience to your Maker's command, you will talk of him, and his works, and truth, "when

you go out, and when you come in, when you sit down, and when you rise up.”

Another truth, early and often to be inculcated, which young children are able to understand, and will feel, is, that sleep, health, and strength, are the gifts of God. And this you will make indisputable, by taking an opportunity of carrying them to the bedside of a brother, sister, or playmate, when sick and in pain. Immediately after the visit, tell them you waited for this opportunity to convince them of the truth they have been taught, that it is God who maketh sick and maketh well. This instruction will have more weight, upon their own recovery from languishing disease and pain, to the enjoyment of health and strength.

It is no less useful to teach children that life and death are, like sickness and pain, the appointment of God. The time to realize this truth is, when the awful report is just brought to their ears, that a servant, friend, or neighbour, well known to your children, is dead. Then the circumstances of the deceased immediately before death, the advice of physicians without any benefit, the grief of friends and relations, are all to be urged as sensible proofs that God taketh away our breath in infancy, youth, or riper years, just as he sees fit, and that none can deliver out of his hands.

At the same time, you should be mindful to tell your children what the news they have heard, *Such a one is dead*, means. Then assure them, that to die is to pass out of a changing world into one unchangeable, to be happy or miserable in a degree inconceivable, according to what the deceased has been and done; that to the unbelieving, proud, and wicked, whether rich or poor, kings or beggars, death is the beginning of sorrows; but to every one who has lived and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ,

it is the translation of the soul to the perfection of holiness and joy for ever more.

Should it please God to bring your own children into apparent danger of death, yet spare them, you must not omit telling them how you felt their pain, and hung over their bed with tears, but could give them no relief; how you made your prayer to God, by whose power alone they were healed: Or should either of you, their parents, be brought back from the borders of the grave to embrace your offspring, then is the season to impress their minds with a conviction, that the Lord of *life* and *death* hath recovered you in tender mercy, to be still the guide of their youth, their affectionate counsellor, and best earthly friends. This has a powerful tendency to work upon their gratitude, and lead them to love the name of the Lord, who is kind to them in a matter so greatly affecting their welfare.



## SUNDAY XXXVIII.

### CHAP. XXXVIII.

On the Education of Children.

**T**HE methods of instruction pointed out above should be used, and the several grand truths above mentioned should be inculcated by the time they have reached to the age of fourteen. After this period, they are generally capable of perceiving the force of the capital arguments upon which a Christian life is to be supported against all opposition from without or within. Now, their faculties are able also to receive those important doctrines, which

few can understand before. It follows, therefore, that if parents are spared till they see their offspring so far advanced, duty now requires of them, and they will be exceedingly criminal, should they neglect to inculcate the absolute obligation lying upon us to love God, to delight in his word and service; the folly, weakness, misery, and sin of peevishness, discontent, passion, pride, envy, revenge, lewdness, or a worldly, selfish, covetous spirit.

By this time, also, your children will have committed so many faults, have been so often corrected, or sharply rebuked for them, and only restrained, contrary to natural inclination, from committing more and greater, that you will have various and strong proofs to convince them they are totally corrupt in their nature, disaffected to the government and will of God, and full of vile propensities. Now produce the scripture character of fallen man: "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live. We all like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way."

To prove how truly they and their manners are thus described, tell them what vigilance, and care, and correction, and restraint have been used with them from their infancy, to conquer their innate evil, and incline them to love God and man. Then appeal to their consciences, whether after all they do not find vile tempers ready to get the mastery, though they dare not suffer them to break out, for fear of your displeasure. Whilst you are thus unanswerably proving their base spirit, you must do it with tender love, lest, by seeming to upbraid, their pride should be inflamed, and their prejudice increased against the truth. And the use you are immediately to make of this discovery, is to prove to them the great need of a Redeemer. For after having made

it evident, as they cannot deny, that in a thousand instances they have done presumptuously what God hath forbidden, and taken pleasure in so doing ; after proving the complication of folly, injustice, ingratitude, and rebellion against God, which has been in their conduct ; they will easily see the all-important conclusion, that it did not become him, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, to pardon such sinful creatures, and bring them to glory without an atonement, which should remain, not only in time, but through all eternity, a demonstration of his infinite abhorrence of sin, whilst he was giving salvation to men ruined by it ; that without shedding of blood there could be no remission, nor any other way than through Christ crucified, for the wisdom, justice, and mercy of God, to obtain a joint triumph in the salvation of man.

Now also is the time to explain to them the great things revealed in scripture ; that the Redeemer is God, though he dwelt amongst men in the likeness of sinful flesh, and died on the cross, that all who believe in him might be pardoned, sanctified, and saved ; that no morality or religion (where the gospel is proclaimed) can be acceptable to the Father, however men extol it, which is not practised in entire dependence upon Christ the Mediator.

One point more your children are now very capable of understanding from holy writ, viz. their inability, without the grace of God, to live as his word absolutely requires. Observe to them how often they have broken their resolutions, acted against their strongest convictions, been sorry for so doing, strove earnestly to make themselves better, and yet were constantly defeated, still only the more entangled, vexed, and guilty in their own eyes. Tell them, this always is and must be the case till the Spirit of God is implored, and their whole confidence

placed in his power and influence : that God, knowing our weakness, has commanded us to ask and seek for his teaching, guidance, and defence. Desire them to make the experiment; to have done with placing any dependence on vows, promises, and good resolutions; to pray, as creatures without strength, and utterly depraved, for the Spirit of God; and conclude with assuring them, that in this very manner you yourself make application for power to lead a Christian life, and succeed.

Christian parents, who have had a liberal education, ought certainly to use many other methods with their children when advancing towards manhood, in order to form their principles and practice according to the word of God. At this season of life, it will be of admirable use to remark upon criminals doomed to an ignominious death. Let your children often hear that these enormous offenders, in general, were early despisers of God's word, his Son, and grace; therefore their sins soon grew to an horrid size. Help them to trace the gay pleasure-loving young woman from her first dislike of seriousness and religion, to the loss of her honour, her friends, and all comfort: till her hands are imbrued in murdering the offspring of her lust. Point out to them the robber, thief, perhaps assassin in embryo, in the youth of high spirit, infected with the leprosy of lewdness, a passion for gaming, or a proud desire of appearing above his equals. Mark out to them the effects of self-will, from its impatience of control under tutors and parents, at last delivering up the man of sense, education, and fashion, to be hanged like a dog.

It is incumbent upon you, in this alarming manner, not only to warn your children against passion, lust, and extravagance, but to persuade them, those only are safe, and kept from the violent tyranny of

every lust, who believe in and call upon the Lord Jesus Christ. In full proof of this truth, your knowledge of the world will put it in your power to name to them many examples, where fine parts are shamefully abused, and shining abilities rendered pernicious in an high degree by lewdness, intemperance, or a proud impatient spirit.

These detestable evils, be careful to assure your children, will generally prevail where Christian principles are neglected; and that the Bible, understood and believed, is the only barrier against the ravages which sin makes amongst men. This will work strongly in favour of true religion, and lead them highly to esteem it, not only as necessary to everlasting happiness in the next world, but as our best friend, and only certain protector from evil and ruin in this.

The last method of instruction I shall mention of equal use with those above, is to remark to your children, now capable of observation, the amiable behaviour of real Christians. I suppose you are acquainted with some who justify their title to this glorious name. Observe to them the tranquillity of their countenance, and the modesty of their manners; how free they are from passion and positiveness, ill-natured wit, or conceit of any superiority in themselves; how far from despising those who are destitute of their advantages, either in understanding or education, birth or riches; how careful to avoid giving pain or uneasiness to any in their company.

Still farther to exalt in their eyes the present inestimable value of Christian knowledge, carry your children to see sincere Christians in the midst of their severest trials, and to hear the patient meek sufferers blessing God, under the pressure of all their troubles. Their discourse, their very countenance

will edify, and convince them that true greatness of mind, and invincible courage in the evil day, are the precious fruit of unfeigned faith in Christ, who trains up all his disciples to a cheerful resignation and absolute surrender of themselves to the holy will of God.

And if an opportunity could be found of bringing your child to the bedside of a departing saint, this object would infinitely exceed the force of simple instruction. Your child would never forget the composure and fortitude, the lively hope and consolation painted on the very countenance of the Christian; nor his warm expressions of love, and gratitude to the Saviour, for a heaven of peace within, and assurance of pardon, instead of gloomy thoughts and foreboding apprehensions, or stupid insensibility to any future existence, the general case of dying men.

All persons of rank or affluence, of education and learning, have it in their power to use these, and many other methods of the same nature, for the advantage of their offspring. And if you know and feel that the favor of God is incomparably more than the praise of men, the happiness of eternity above the pleasures of time, and that there is only one way to glory marked out by the word of God; in this case a constant attention to the eternal welfare of your children will be delightful. You will find your labor of love not lost; you will see considerable impressions made upon their minds, and in general your prayers answered.

But if, instead of this attention, you can take custom and fashion for your rule, consuming your leisure hours in sensual gratification, or silly amusements, setting apart no time for the education of your children in religious knowledge; if they hear from you no earnest affectionate exhortations, above

all things to love God, and serve him ; if they do not see you are more concerned for their salvation, than for their prosperity and advancement here, your conduct is without excuse : your regard to scripture, whatever you profess, worthless and hypocritical ; your ignorance of the excellency of God, his service, and the only means of solid peace, shameful.

Examine, therefore, and prove your faith by your works. There is scarcely a clearer proof whom you serve, God or Mammon, than this, the care you take for the salvation of your children, or your neglect of their souls.

Further, it is a duty all parents owe their children, to inure them to *industry*, to inspire them with a contempt and abhorrence of idleness, as the great corrupter of the human mind, and inlet to every vice. The poor must strongly insist upon their children's giving themselves diligently to work, not only as necessary to get their bread, but as the only means of keeping them from pilfering and theft, from infamy and the gallows. The children of the rich stand in no less need of being excited to industrious application of their time and talents. From their earliest years they should hear, it is not wealth, a large estate, or even nobility of birth, which can preserve them from being truly despicable and malignant to mankind, unless they *take pains* to acquire what will improve the mind, and give them ability to perform the duty they owe to society ; that without love of employment suited to their high station, they, like truant school-boys, must seek men as idle as themselves for company ; and, to kill time, must be eager in the chace after foolish amusements, not above the size of a little school-boy's mind ; and even sink into all meanness, and the horrid wickedness of a debauched life, to find in that sink their

chief pleasure. On the contrary, by love of study and fine writers, by being active and useful, by cultivating their advantages of station, they will never feel time a burden on their hands. They will be independent on a thousand trifles, which agitate and vex their equals. They will always be doing good, and be honorable in their generation. These instructions, enforced by the very conduct they inculcate, will work mightily as an antidote to the intoxicating pride which wealth and grandeur naturally inspire. They will readily then believe they were not born only to please themselves. Exemplary conduct, I say, must enforce these precepts; for, if the persons who give them violate them too, they can have no effect, because children must necessarily believe their parents judge that to be the way of pleasure and happiness in which they see them walk, because they do so out of choice; and if they did not think it best, why should they choose it? As it will, therefore, appear cruel in parents to correct or reprove for tempers and practices their children learn from themselves, so it will be absurd to expect precept or reproof should profit them, when the persons from whom they come are not under their influence.

After the welfare of the soul, and the improvement of the mind have been duly consulted, one attention more is necessary in parents, viz. to make provision for their children, sufficient, if they can, to enable them, by honest industry, or some liberal profession, to support themselves, and be useful members of society. For what can be more contrary to the feelings of parental love, than, by idleness or extravagance, to expose their offspring to poverty, or to force them to settle in a station of life much beneath that in which they were born, a cause frequently of much vexation to them, and a bitter dis-

appointment which few are able to bear. But with regard to what may properly be called a provision, reason, not fashion; the word of God, not blind affection, must determine. When persons who were born to no estate amass wealth with a design to raise their children above the want of any employment or profession, scanty must be their charities, and strong their love of money. Yet so far is opulence from being any real benefit to children, that (few instances excepted) it proves a corrupter of their hearts, a pander to their lusts, fixing them in habits of vanity, extravagance, and luxury.

The last duty I shall mention, which parents owe to their children, is to pray to God for them; for though the methods of religious instruction mentioned have a natural tendency to do much good, they cannot of themselves convert the heart to God. You may take all pains for this purpose, but still those who receive the Lord Jesus Christ are born not of blood, nor of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Therefore you must humbly and earnestly pray to him for success in your attempts, that, as the inhabitants of the world are increased by your offspring, an addition may be made by their names to the church of the living God, and the inhabitants of heaven.

## SUNDAY XXXIX.

## CHAP. XXXIX.

The Duty of Children towards their Parents.

**IT** is the duty of children to honour their parents, by abstaining from every thing that may reasonably give them the least offence or disquiet. Young people, who have conscience towards God, will think his command, "Honour thy father and mother," worthy their strictest observance, and know that this respect paid to parents is well-pleasing unto the Lord, and his blessing is upon dutiful children. On the contrary, disobedience to parents is strongly marked as the just object of his displeasure. For, after forbidding idolatry, (a crime levelled directly against his own glory), and commanding every Israelite to pronounce every idolater accursed, the self-willed despiser of his parents is held forth as the next object of universal execration: "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father and mother: and all the people shall say amen," Deut. xxvii. And in case a son grown up did, after advice, and entreaty, and command, withstand the authority of his parents, they were ordered by the Almighty "to lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place, and they were to say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die. So shall thou put evil away from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear," Deut. xxi. What

a deep impression of the guilt incurred by irreverent behaviour from children to their parents must this law, enacted by the Most High, make on all who fear him? For though it be not executed *now* on the stubborn refractory son, it still remains a decisive proof of God's detestation of such a temper, for he changeth not.

A part of this reverence due from children to their parents is to conceal their infirmities, and, as far as truth and justice will admit, extenuate their faults. This is but a small return for the great benefits children have received. And if they can join in exposing either their indiscretions or faults, can publish or ridicule what is the shame of their parents, they act over again the base part of the wicked Ham, righteous Noah's son, which brought down upon him a curse.

It is the duty of children to requite their parents, if they are able, for the benefit of their education. Ingratitude is the only sin which never found a single advocate. Yet, of all ingratitude one creature can shew to another, neglect in children to support and comfort their parents is the blackest: for what care and expence, to promote the good of their offspring, do parents ever refuse? Now, when, in the course of providence, they come to need some return of the same tender disposition; when the infirmities of age, losses, or afflictions, oppress them; what child, not destitute of all humane feelings, no less than religion, but would rejoice to prove as helpful to his parents, now going out of the world, as they were to himself when he first came into it? This expression of gratitude is marked in scripture, and neglect of it branded, not only as a renunciation of the gospel (whatever professions of zeal for it may be pretended) but as a crime which many Pagans would abhor. "If any provide not for his own

house" (*not his children*, they are not the persons meant here, but his aged parents and near relations in want), "he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," 1 Tim. v.

What proportion of his income a son ought to set apart for the support of his parents must be fixed by his condition. Yet this rule is ever to be remembered: If the provision bear no proportion to the ability of the person who makes it, God and man will regard it as a despicable offering. And if a son or child can be lavish in pursuit of pleasure, and live in expensive splendour, whilst a scanty subsistence is allowed to their parents, sense of duty certainly is not felt. What is given, is given not from love of God, not from affection to his parents, but to silence remorse, or avoid the scandal of suffering them to depend on charity.

The last instance of duty from children to their parents, which I shall mention, is obedience; obedience, without exception, in all cases to which parental authority reaches: and all cases are comprehended under that authority, where the command given to children does not oppose the revealed will of God, nor do violence to their conscience in matters of religion.

And, generally, those who are neglected or despised by their offspring, may thank themselves for it; it is the effect and punishment of their own sin. They fostered, when they should have corrected, every wicked temper in their children's earliest years. They shamefully sacrificed parental authority to a froward mind, and abjectly submitted to be governed by those over whom they were appointed governors, in the order of nature, and by the command of God.

Where this most foolish and cruel fondness has not been the cause of undutifulness to parents, a

profane education, in ignorance of Christian principles, often has ; for this encourages a proud independent spirit, which, as it fears not God, will pay reverence to no man, nor feel obligation, nor bear restraint. So that, excepting a few cases, Christian parents, through the grace of God succeeding their endeavours, reap as they have sown, and often enjoy, even before they leave the world, the fruit of those cares and pains with which they studied to promote the salvation of their children, and often die in the pleasing expectation of meeting them in endless glory.

After the relation between parents and children, that subsisting between masters and servants follows. In either station Christians are furnished with ample directions and cogent motives to discharge their duty with comfort to themselves, to all the family, and to the great honour of their holy profession.

Servants who receive the word of God will be faithful to their trust : free from fraud and deceit themselves, and careful to prevent injury being done to their masters by conniving at frauds which they know others practice. This point has been before insisted on. Besides, they will obey their masters without that sullen look and behaviour which would render their services ungrateful, and their persons offensive : a sure sign of a lofty spirit, to which servitude and subjection, though ever so reasonably, is galling. This surly humour in servants, is seldom shewn but in families, where the lucre of the place, compared with that of grander families, is perhaps small ; or at least the servant is hired, not for show or luxury of life, but labour and usefulness. In these instances, the benefit of Christian doctrine and faith is especially to be manifest ; for the Lord and Saviour of Christians requires them " with good

will to do service, as to himself, and not to men," Eph. vi. 7.

It is the duty of servants also patiently to bear reproof for their faults, and to amend; not rising up eagerly in self-vindication, ever apt to impute all admonition to ill-nature or passion in their superior; and, if they hear reproof without marks of disgust and contempt, to think themselves at liberty to regard it no more than is necessary to keep their place. But you cannot act in this unreasonable manner, and obey your Lord. You cannot adorn the gospel, as you are commanded, if you are deaf to just reproof, and hardened against it. Nay, you bring shame upon your religious profession; you make it contemptible, and even to be dreaded in a family. It is the mark of a Christian, when he does well, and suffers for it, to bear it patiently. You do ill, and are in fault, yet feel anger and resentment against your master, who has a right, and does well to reprove you. The plain and excellent direction given in scripture you trample upon; for that strictly requires "servants to be obedient to their own masters and to please them well in all things, not answering again."

Masters, in their turn, who are Christians, will behave with justice, mildness, and real good will to their servants. These tempers, essential to the faithful in Christ Jesus, have been already pointed out and enforced. I shall, therefore, now call your attention to the duties peculiar to governors of the family. In the first instance, they are to be careful all their domestics behave well. Magistrates are chiefly in fault when the manners of the people are dissolute: for the law invests them with power to punish and control evil doers. But masters of families, with less difficulty, can govern their own little commonwealth, and prevent disorders there. Ser-

vants are upon a level with cattle, fed and kept only for their work. They are fellow-creatures, capable of knowing God equally with their masters, and in his sight as good as themselves. In this view it is their indispensable duty, and a necessary effect of Christian benevolence, to suffer no open violation of God's law, to oblige their servants to a regular attendance upon the worship of God on the Lord's day, and to abstain from all profanation of it; to furnish them with books calculated to enlighten the mind, and bring them to the excellent knowledge of Christ. And if business does not, in fact, render it impracticable, they ought to call the members of their household to join every day in worshipping God, the giver of the blessings each member of the family enjoys.

For the same reason it is your duty, who preside in a house, to set a Christian example to all under your roof; constantly to abstain from all business and diversion on the Lord's day, and, by worshipping your Maker in the great congregation, let your servants see you act honestly from conscience towards God; and that from reverence to his law, you neither talk loosely, swear profanely, nor live in intemperance or covetousness. By this exemplary conduct you will check and restrain those about your person, and be the means of stirring up ignorant sinful creatures to repent, and turn to God; or if they obstinately persist in their wickedness, you will not be chargeable as accessory to it in any degree.

I shall mention only one branch more of duty, which masters owe to their servants, viz. encouragement and reward for good behaviour. Kind expressions, without lifting up the man, quicken an ingenuous mind to greater attention and diligence. They ought, therefore, frequently to be used to alleviate servitude. Further, when the prime of life

and strength have been laid out in your service; when fidelity to your interest, and application to your business have always distinguished your dependent, you should, out of your affluence, make a proper provision for him in old age; or, in case of sickness and accidental loss of limbs, you should shew him great compassion. Consider how much others have lost by the dishonesty of those about them: how much trouble, anxiety, and vexation they have suffered: whilst you committed, with great composure and confidence, your affairs into the hands of a good and faithful servant, and have received no damage. How much of your comfort in this life has been owing to this material circumstance! Where then is your Christian love, your generosity, or your humanity, if you do not take pleasure in shewing much kindness in return?

Having pointed out the several duties of a Christian in his domestic relation, I will finish the subject with a picture of a family in which each member lives by faith in Christ Jesus, and under the tempers it produces.

Consider those who preside in it; they cordially love and study to make each other happy. Whilst both with boundless benevolence watch over their children, ambitious to educate them for immortality in the presence of God; carefully, therefore, they check every evil in its first appearance, and aim to inspire them with admiration of all excellency. Both, with impartial affection for their whole offspring, gladly give them every innocent gratification, every liberty and joy, which wisdom and duty will permit. Look upon the children, what affiance in the love of their parents! What prompt obedience to their will! What pleasure in their company! Look upon the servants, faithful to their office, and prudent in their deportment, they are treated with

respect, and, by the kindness they meet with, called upon to use each other well; whilst parents, children, and servants meet together day by day to magnify the name of the Lord, who maketh them that dwell together in one house, live in peace; whilst all are looking forward, in their degree of faith, to a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where, without sin, and beyond the reach of temptation, they shall dwell together.

The age we live in affords us instances of this sort; and were not a despicable notion of Christianity, so commonly entertained, as if it were a mere assent to certain articles, or a set of religious ceremonies; were not the Bible character of a Christian deemed by many much too strict, and by more an unattainable degree of perfection, individuals, and whole families, in great numbers, would become altogether subject to the power and grace of Jesus Christ, and walk in this world, even as he also walked.

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## PRAYER,

Suited to the subject of the preceding Chapters.

**O LORD GOD** and heavenly Father, have mercy upon all families called after the name of thy dear Son. Give to each member of the house grace to observe and do what thou hast commanded them. Teach servants to do their work with all fidelity; free from sloth and carelessness, from an obstinate and sullen temper. Give them wisdom to consider their condition, not as any disgrace or hardship, but as the place thou hast allotted to them. Let it be their comfort to know, that by doing the business of their station to the Lord, and not unto men, of him they shall receive the reward.

Be favourable to all heads of families. Let them not be high-minded, unfeeling, and unreasonable towards their dependents. Convince them, no merit in them, but thy all-wise appointment, makes the subordination; not that the rich or great should be frantic over their servants, but add abundantly to the comfort of their lives. O give them to abhor the meanness of galling those who work for them, by violent passion, or treating them with contempt. May they remember they also have a master in heaven, who is no respecter of persons; before whom both rulers and servants must give account of their behaviour to each other. Inspire all who preside in the family with mildness and mercy towards every one under their roof. Make it a pleasure to them to comfort and support their faithful servants under their afflictions, and give them grace to teach them the fear of the Lord, in whose hands is their breath, and whose are all their ways.

Teach parents to regard their children as immortal creatures intrusted to their care to be brought up for God. When they sit down with them in the house, and when they walk by the way, when they lie down, and when they rise up, may they speak to them of thy power and glory, and the mightiness of thy kingdom. Make them vigilant and resolute to check the first sallies of their evil tempers, and may they dread nothing more than being accessories to the destruction of their own offspring, by profaneness, or sensuality, or want of concern for their salvation. May they earnestly call upon thee, O God, to endue them with wisdom to train up their children in the way they should go. Give thy blessing to the relation established between them both, that parents may rejoice to see their children growing up as pleasant plants before thee, and children have reason in time and eternity to bless God for their parents.

Put thy spirit into the hearts of young people, that they may behave with all reverence, obedience, and love. Not heedless when instructed, not stubborn when reprov'd, not ungrateful to forget how much they are bound to requite their parents.

Grant, we beseech thee, O Lord, that all who are united in the bands of holy wedlock may live in tender regard and love to each other, and teach, by their own example, all inferior members of the family to discharge the duty of their station.

And we, of this family, now kneeling before thee, beg, O God, we may be forgiven, for Christ's sake, all the instances of irreverence, unkindness, or passion, by which we have offended, and provok'd one another. O grant us repentance, and hearty sorrow for our faults, and grace to dwell together in unity and godly love, that, when we are called to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, we may not be confounded. We ask this for the sake, and through the intercession of our Lord and only Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



## SUNDAY XL.

### CHAP. XL.

#### On Self-denial.

**F**ALSE teachers court the favour of men, by base compliances, with their corrupt affections. The **TRUE WITNESS** demands the sacrifice of them all in the plainest terms: "Except a man deny himself,

and take up his cross daily, and follow me, he cannot be my disciple."

Self-denial is then beyond a doubt the duty of every Christian. But in what instances, how far it must reach, and the peculiar motives furnished by the gospel to deny self, are points of useful and necessary consideration: because enthusiasts always place much of self-denial in things absurd, frivolous, or equivocal. And superstition has bound heavy burdens upon men's shoulders as self-denial, little regarding, at the same time, those noble and substantial acts in which it really consists.

Each of these points, therefore, shall be discussed, and every duty to himself, which the Christian is obliged and enabled to discharge, explained. Self-denial originates in the corruption of our nature by the offence of Adam. Was there no innate propensity to evil in all his offspring (Christ alone excepted), we might indeed have been warned not to debase our dignity by a compliance with established iniquity. But, supposing we possessed untainted excellence of nature, so far would this be from self-denial, it would be the highest self-gratification. In this case, a total steadfast opposition to corrupt manners would be perfectly undisturbed by any thing of a contrary tendency within. The native and *only* bent of the soul would be to perform duty in its full extent. Thus we conceive it must necessarily be with angels, who are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, and must consequently see what passes amongst men; for, to suppose it is by self-denial they abstain from the pollutions that are in the world, would destroy our idea of their perfection.

But our present condition is directly opposite to that of beings who never fell from God. A corrupt bias prevails naturally in the heart of man, which, instead of appearing detestable to him, as it ought, is

cherished. And such pleasure is found from evil indulgence, that the sacrifice of it, in obedience to the will of God, is compared by him, who knew what was in man, to the pain of cutting off a right hand, and plucking out a right eye. For though, in fact, our happiness be inseparable from uniform subjection to the divine will, yet, depraved as we are, we often *think* them incompatible. Hence men naturally fight against God for what they fancy are their native rights, as against a tyrant; nor can they ever submit to him, without first doing violence to their own appetites.

This being our natural state, the Lord Jesus Christ assures us, without reserve, that if we ever partake of his great salvation, we must not only oppose the wickedness of the world, but those inclinations too, which are interwoven with our frame, properly, therefore, called *ourselves*.

Having thus briefly remarked the origin of self-denial, the important instances in which we must practice it are, in the next place, to be considered.

As constitution makes that an easy sacrifice to some, which to others is most painful; and there are also some cases, where decency, reputation, and worldly interest lead men in a measure to deny themselves; and others, where the grace of God, and power of faith, must operate to the denial of ourselves, I shall begin with the instances of more easy practice, and ascend to those in which the Christian only can persevere to the honour of God.

Temperance then is not to be maintained without self-denial; for though few comparatively are infamous for gluttony or drunkenness, yet not to exceed the limits of temperance is matter of some difficulty to most people. We are apt to approach towards excess, till the body becomes a clog to the

operations of the mind, and delight in things of a spiritual nature is abated, if not destroyed. Without hurt to our character, we may indulge at table, till we can relish nothing but what suits an indolent spirit. How many, vanquished by this low appetite, often discover, and oftener conceal their vexation, when ignorance or neglect in the kitchen has disappointed the *full* gratification of their palate in the parlour! And how many sensual remarks are made in most companies, upon what deserves no more to be the subject of our discourse, than the husks the swine devour! These things occurring so frequently, prove self-denial needful even at our common meals. Indeed he who receives any other gratification, than health and hunger will make the common provisions of his table yield, is already a transgressor, and has given way to intemperance. He encourages an appetite which will sensualize his soul, enthrall it to fleshly pleasure, and of course render him averse to suffer in the least degree for truth and conscience sake. And those who feed themselves without fear, or allow themselves to dwell on the dainties of the table, make provision for the flesh. So far from being temperate, as all who run successfully in the Christian race must be, they are voluptuous; incapable of making the least progress towards Heaven, till they obey the command; "Put a knife to thy throat, thou man given to appetite."

As we must deny ourselves the pleasure of feasting the palate with meats, no less carefully must we avoid excess in drink. It is necessary to speak in the fullest and clearest manner here, because this carnal indulgence many place amongst our infirmities, for which honesty, and generosity, and good nature, sufficiently atone.

The proof then that it is our indispensable duty to subdue every inclination to drink in excess, is ex-

ceedingly strong: for this offence carries with it great provocation on many accounts. In every instance, it is a waste of that plenty which God designed should supply the wants of men. Contrary to reason and humility, you, by excessive drinking, inflame your body, whilst others pine away, destitute of the necessaries of life. You swallow down pernicious draughts in your carousing, which properly applied, would revive the health of those who languish in want of such a cordial.

Had you a numerous offspring settled in a distant land, some of whom had great abundance, whilst the rest were destitute, without any fault of theirs; what manifold grief and indignation would you feel, to hear the former consumed their abundance in excess, refusing to relieve the necessities of their own brethren? Yet this is always done in the sight of our common Father, when men waste, on the gratification of a base appetite, what might have fed the hungry, and clothed the naked. Even allowing the intemperate drinker is rich, his conduct is cruel towards those who are in want before his eyes, or so near him, that if he was not wilfully deaf or blind, he must hear their groans, and see their distress.

But when a man is poor, or his income only sufficient, by frugal management, to support his family, excessive drinking, in this case, is a crime still more black; for he tramples upon natural affection, and, whilst taking his cups, is stripping his children of their garments, and snatching the bread from the mouths of his almost famished family. Though his besotted companions falsely and stupidly call him no one's enemy but his own, he is in truth the worst of foes to his own household: and the father of us all looks down upon no one more daringly in rebellion against the law of love than the drunkard, or more afflicting to those who are, alas! his near relations.

Further, our reason is an inestimable gift from God. It renders us capable of receiving knowledge from his word and works here, and of enjoying his love for ever. We are happy in ourselves, and useful to others, just in proportion as our reason is improved and sanctified by divine grace. Accordingly, the loss of our reason is universally judged to be the sorest calamity which can befall us. What a crime then must it be to suspend wilfully the exercise of reason, and become incapable of knowing what we either say or do? We are commanded to set a watch before our mouths, as those who must give an account of every idle word we speak. What more audacious contempt of this command, than for a man to intoxicate himself, till there is nothing so foolish, abusive, filthy, or blasphemous, but he will utter it?

Besides, duty requires that every appetite be brought into subjection to Christ. What a daring violation, to inflame your passions by excessive drinking! Yet this is inseparable from intemperance. It increases pride, and inspires insolence, from whence come quarrels and implacable hatred. It often separates between dearest friends, hurrying them into duels, and bloody transports of revenge upon each other. Lust also it excites to the utmost degree.

So provoking an abuse of plenty, so shameful a violence committed upon our reason, so daring an act of rebellion against the government of God, must certainly exclude all who die under the guilt of it from his favour. The scripture abounds with denunciations of punishment to be inflicted on drunkards, and on all who inflame themselves with wine. It shall produce but one; it is fully decisive, and enough to make their blood run cold against whom it is pointed.

“But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants and eat and drink with the drunken, the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” Matth. xxiv. 48.

Not only the present evils, therefore, which intemperance draws after it, but the final doom of this shameful sin, are revealed in scripture to alarm our fears, and give us full proof of their misery, who are enslaved by love of wine.

So that either we must utterly subdue it, or give up heaven and God. But as the thought of losing his favour is worse than death to every real Christian, it follows that, however he may naturally incline to excess in drinking, or company tempt to it, or worldly advantage allure, as a recommendation to the intemperate, he will persevere in a course of sobriety, and, whether he eats or drinks, take care by no means to displease his God.

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## SUNDAY XLI.

### CHAP. XLI.

On the Sin of Lewdness.

**E**VERY Christian must deny the irregular gratification of his love for woman, to which depraved nature violently impels; because this passion, though

necessary for the propagation of mankind, and useful in wedlock to several excellent ends, yet, unless restrained and governed by the law of God, it proves one of the vilest seducers, and a source of evils extensive and beyond number. What time, parts, and influence are prostituted through the impulse of lust to inveigle and debauch the innocent! Men of liberal education and finest sense will be guilty of what shocks every mind influenced by the fear of God, or compassion for their fellow-creatures; guilty of lying in wait to gain an advantage in an unwary moment, by vile deceit, over a heedless virgin; of bringing her to indelible shame, and loading her parents also with hopeless grief; guilty of offering to the ruined object of their lust an injury, which, if done to a sister or daughter of their own, they would instantly revenge with the point of the sword. Instigated by their lust, they will open the way to adulterous commerce, and all its train of mischiefs, by seducing unmarried women, who too seldom prove chaste in wedlock when they have been debauched before. They will be guilty of contributing to fill the world with whores, at once its sin and scourge; creatures abandoned to every detestable temper and practice; cruel, remorseless, corruptors of youth, plunging them into desperate courses, till they are cut off by the hand of justice.

These consequences, in a less or greater degree, are sure to follow the unlawful indulgence of our natural appetite for women. Yet these make only a small part of the evils which flow from fornication. No pen can describe fully what the soul suffers by it. When sense of duty or modesty remain, the first commission of this sin is punished upon the spot with the horror of a guilty mind. By frequent repetition, all sense of religion is extinguished, and all intercourse with God ceases.

The company of men hardened in the practice of lewdness is sought after as a refuge, till the secret offender against chastity contracts a brow of brass, and becomes first an abject slave to lust, and then an infamous pleader in its defence; his conscience is seared, the captive hugs his chains, and glories in his shame.

Add to this catalogue of dreadful evils the bloody quarrels amongst the lewd, and the murders which they are led to commit; murder of children yet unborn, loading the mind with guilt; and imbittering life beyond conception; murder often of the new-born babe, which the law avenges by the infamous death of its sanguinary parent.

Instead, therefore, of saying (as libertines impudently speak) where is the harm of taking a little pleasure out of the way, you will perceive, that thieves and robbers are harmless and honorable too, compared with the *lewd*, because injuries from these open foes have very soon an end, in most instances are borne with ease, and may be redressed, never striking at our immortal interest. But the seducer of a female destroys her reputation, tears her away from her family and friends, banishes her from the society of virtuous woman, entangles her in the bloom of her years in the snare which will soon drag her down from her life of pleasure to a condition below brutality, the condition of a prostitute. So that the very mention, or even remembrance of her name shall afresh excite grief in her family and relations, grief unassuaged by the least ray of hope in her death or after-state.

Upon this fair representation of the case, ask now any young woman, in the use of her reason, into whose hands she had better fall; into those of the lewd, the dishonest, or the robber? Into their hands, she would say, who will only take my pro-

perty, and fill me with momentary terrors; not into the libertine's who will plunge me into infamy, lingering wretchedness, abandoned vice, and eternal misery. Such pests to society are men of gallantry and pleasure! How astonishing, that ruin of virgins, dishonour of families, heart-breaking injuries done to worthy aged parents, with a variety of crimes, the certain effects of uncontrolled lust, should be lightly passed over as nothing vile, under the magic name of love and gallantry? When will a public spirit and generous concern to prevent such heavy woes excite men to brand every word spoken in favour of lewdness, as they do what is spoken to lessen our abhorrence of perjury and assassination? When will men have understanding to perceive that the natural appetite for women under the law of God, is like a river in its channel, a perpetual blessing; but, bursting that sacred bank, becomes a wasting flood; and that he never more tenderly consulted the good of his rational creatures, than in absolutely forbidding every degree of lewdness.

Though there be little reason to hope this public spirit will take place, the scripture presents every young man with the rise, progress, and fatal end of fornication, contrasting them with the various allurements which lead us into that sin. There the lips of the harlot are painted dropping sweets as the honeycomb, and her mouth smoother than oil, but instantly, to quench the rising of an impure desire, "her end," we are taught of God, "is bitter as wormwood, and sharp as a two-edged sword," Prov. v. 3, 4. The simple young man she invites to take his fill of love till the morning; but the treacherous offer is immediately laid bare, and under the thin veil of momentary joy, is discovered an upbraiding conscience, pouring out that sad confession, "How have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof!"

Further, lest brutish love of pleasure should tempt young men to fancy, they may easily retreat after yielding a little to lust, or that simple fornication is not a sin of high provocation, God has emphatically exposed both these false conclusions. "He" (the lewd young man) "goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks," (utterly stupid and incorrigible), "till a dart striketh through his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life," Prov. vii. "Why wilt thou embrace the bosom of a stranger? for the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings. His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins; he shall die without instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray," Prov. v. 20.

To finish the testimony published in the Old Testament against this sin, take notice that the whore and Sodomite are condemned in the same sentence; to teach us, I apprehend, to what horrid lengths, in wickedness, lewdness will lead; therefore both ought to be detested. "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor Sodomite of the sons of Israel," Deut. xxii. 21.

This ought to silence the ignorance of foolish men, who wax confident in defence of fornication, from a notion that it is condemned only in two or three passages in the New Testament.

Were it so, this would be sufficient; for a *single* declaration from God of his will claims from us no less regard and obedience, than if it was often repeated. But instead of a passage or two only in the New Testament, which absolutely condemn fornication, no sin can be named (contempt of Christ cruci-

fied excepted) which is mentioned so often, or more strongly marked as the object of God's wrath. Our almighty Judge not only ranks it with crimes of the deepest dye, Mat. xv. 19, Mark vii. 21, but his great apostle scarcely writes an epistle without some alarming prohibition against it. In one place, he beautifully opposes the benevolent gratification of our natural appetite in a lawful way, to their terrible condition who live in lewd commerce with women: "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge," Heb. xiii. In another, he not only affirms, that adultery, fornication, lasciviousness, and uncleanness, are the works of the flesh, of our corrupt nature, but with remarkable vehemence he presses us to lay it to heart as a certain truth, that these things absolutely exclude men from heaven: "Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 21.

In his judgment, lewdness ought to have no existence within the pale of the Christian church. "Fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be once mentioned amongst you, as becometh saints. For this ye know, that no whoremonger nor unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God," Ephes. v. And, lest the plausible pleadings for lust (in which libertines of fine parts are so expert) should seduce any weak believer to fancy lewdness may be practised with impunity, this awful caution is given: "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for, because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye, therefore, partakers with them," Ephes. v. The same doctrine is strongly enforced on the Christians at Thessalonica; "This is the will of

God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence as the Gentiles, which know not God : for God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness. He, therefore, that despiseth [what is said of the sin and danger of lewdness, and the duty of chastity], despiseth not men, but God."

In his epistle to the Christians at Corinth, a city infamous to a proverb for lewdness, he inspires the believers in Christ with a horror of that sin, by teaching them it is a dreadful profanation, and the worst kind of sacrilege to turn a temple consecrated to God (and such the Christian is) into an habitation for the spirit of uncleanness. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" 1 Cor. vi. "Ye are the temple of the living God; whoso defileth the temple of God, him will God destroy." A sentence twice confirmed by St. John in the book of Revelation; for whoremongers, he declares, are shut out of the gates of the heavenly city, Rev. xxii. 15. Whoremongers have their part assigned them in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death, Rev. xxi.

Sum up now what has been advanced in proof of the evil and sinfulness of lewdness, and you must be convinced how much it is the duty of every Christian, as he loves God, reverences his word, and values his own salvation, to deny himself in every propensity he may feel to indulge unlawfully his nat-

ural appetite for women, and to flee from fornication, as he would from the face of a serpent\*.

Know, therefore, that you must come to this determination, either to trample upon the Christian revelation, and renounce every hope built upon it of finding mercy from God, or to mortify your members, by abstaining from fornication and uncleanness; at all times assured, that this sin alone (supposing it could possibly consist with the observance of Christian duty in other respects) will drown the soul in perdition. This full persuasion of the sin of fornication is absolutely necessary to secure young men, on their entrance into the world, from what is generally the first instance of premeditated rebellion against God, and the first means of rivetting on the sinner that chain which drags down its thousands to the prison of hell.

Further, whenever any end is proposed, or duty enjoined, the means necessary to attain the one, or perform the other, are tacitly included in the general precept; and whatever renders the practice of duty so very precarious, is also virtually forbidden where it can be avoided. From this self-evident truth, every Christian must carry his self-denial much beyond a mere abstinence from the gross acts of fornication and uncleanness. We may abstain thus, from pru-

\* It is necessary that all young persons in a single state should deeply ponder these arguments; because lewdness has a party in its favour from our constitution. Numerous, and daring are those who plead for lewdness. To such a shocking height is this attempt carried, that chastity is generally regarded as impracticable, except in females, who, without the reputation of it, would never be received into families of fashion. By this means, self-denial against the impulses of lust is accounted a grievous task, and the Bible, which enjoins it, an odious book. Thus men's passions are warmly engaged to fight against God whose word so loudly proclaims the evil of their darling lust.

dence and self-considerations, without any love of purity. A Christian must resolutely shun all incitements to unchaste desires; imitating the example of Job, who would not so much as suffer his eyes to fix on any object that might prove a snare. Our Lord confirms the wisdom, and enjoins the necessity of this vigilance, by branding, as the adultery of the heart, the looking upon a woman to lust after her. The temper of our heart stamps our character. No one, therefore, is chaste, who cherishes unclean thoughts, or can suffer a wanton idea to rest upon his mind, or a sound exciting it to play on his ear; for a renewed mind, endued with filial fear of God, and knowledge of sin, has at least as much delicacy respecting what is base and filthy, as fine breeding inspires respecting polite behaviour. A gentleman is not only free from the coarse manners of a clown, but from every thing approaching to such rudeness; and a true Christian, fired with love to God, and ambition to walk worthy of his kingdom and glory, will cultivate purity of heart with all care, and avoid, as infectious, every person, jest, or object, savouring of lasciviousness.

Here then a noble province opens for Christian self-denial! Here the spiritual welfare of the whole church of Christ, in condemning and opposing every fashionable way intended by the world to gratify lewd desires, is most conspicuous. Of this kind, are wanton glances of the eye, that index to what passes within; the melody of amorous songs, that double entendre, mixed dancings, love novels, and above all stage plays. For in this amusement, which (in defiance of common sense and experience, no less than our Christian faith) the world will maintain is innocent; in this amusement, whatever can corrupt the mind is set off to greatest advantage. Every lewd allusion receives strong emphasis from

the actor's air and voice, whilst the greater part of the audience express aloud the filthy joy it gives them. And if a piece untainted with an obscene tincture should gain admittance on the stage, the house must still have their prurient humour gratified in the epilogue or farce, by innuendos, that our chief pleasure consists in what we know naturally with the brute beasts\*.

To live in this world, in direct opposition to its favourite taste, and preserve chastity of mind, is a noble self-denial faith in Christ effects, and an indispensable duty in all his disciples.

\* Some may condemn this censure of the school of virtue, which the stage is often (one would think ironically) called, as harsh and malignant; yet it is supported by some of the world's great and favourite writers. Archbishop Tillotson was never thought rigorous or enthusiastic. Let those who plead for this fashionable amusement hear what he has published on the subject, and blush and repent, or avow their infidelity.

“As the stage now is, plays are intolerable, and not fit to be permitted in any civilized, much less a Christian nation. They do most notoriously minister both to infidelity and vice. By their profaneness, they are apt to instil bad principles, and by their lewdness to dispose to lewd and dissolute practice; therefore, I do not see *how any person pretending to sobriety and virtue, and especially to the pure and holy religion of our blessed Saviour*, can, without great guilt, and open contradiction to his holy profession, be *present* at such lewd and immodest plays, much less *frequent* them, as too many do, who would yet take it very ill to be shut out of the communion of Christians, as they certainly would have been in the first ages of Christianity.”

*Sermon on the Evil of corrupt Communication.*

## SUNDAY XLII.

## CHAP. XLII.

On Self-denial respecting the Love of Money.

**C**ORRUPT self must be denied in its propensity to covetousness, which is in us all: since we are all naturally desirous of wealth, and place much confidence in it. Commerce and custom perpetually cherish this evil desire, and the world sees nothing wrong in being intent to gain as much as is possible with a fair character. By this means, what at first setting out in a trade or profession was no more than an innocent desire of providing honestly for ourselves or family, soon degenerates into inordinate affection, and a very wicked passion.

The propensity, therefore, to love money, a Christian must resist in its first motions, because opposite to the temper of mind which is to govern him, and a contradiction to his situation, who is a stranger on earth, standing in expectation of an immediate separation from all things visible. But this propensity to love money, unless denied, will soon benumb all feeling of futurity, and suffer you to think of nothing intensely or with delight, but wealth and its advantages, utterly excluding all just ideas of religion, which inspire love of God and man, and give victory over worldly lust.

Besides, the gospel is intended to establish all who receive it in full resignation to the will of God, every where, and in all things, instructing us both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. But a covetous spirit can conform to the will of God, only so long as his providence

smiles; in adversity it must fret and murmur. The gospel teaches us to have our whole confidence and delight in God, as our chief happiness; but love of money soon brings a man to conclude gold is the God whose presence is the richest blessing, and want of it the heaviest curse. The gospel is given on purpose to raise our desires with increasing fervour towards God, to fix our affections with immoveable steadfastness on things above, and to engage us in the constant pursuit of them with an ardour in some degree suited to their worth. The love of money is incompatible with love to God, or any other idea of happiness in being with him, than as a refuge from punishment when death comes, and our idol fails.

To mention only one instance more of the contradiction the love of money bears to the state of a Christian; it hardens the heart against the poor and needy. Through fear of lessening, or desire of increasing our treasure, it will shut up our bowels of compassion, till we leave our own flesh to struggle with sickness or want, and to die unassisted by us, though it be in the power of our hands to relieve them. Directly opposite to this selfishness is the disposition of a christian. He is liberal and generous, remembering with joy it is the will of God that those who are rich should be bounteous, and those who have little should gladly give of that little, that there may be no want amongst his creatures. In these several views, the contrariety which the love of money bears to the temper of a Christian, respecting God or man, is glaring; and the duty therefore of self-denial, in subduing every propensity to it, indisputable.

To enforce the practice of this self-denial, it is necessary to explain the nature of that covetousness so much condemned in God's word. It is not of the

*scandalous* kind; it may rule the heart of a man esteemed *very excellent in the world*. The covetous, whom the Lord abhors, Psalm x, are the very persons of whom the wicked speak well. But no one speaks well of those whose love of money makes them fraudulent or miserably penurious. The same idea of covetousness is given us by our Lord and Judge, in that solemn caution, *Take heed, and beware of covetousness*; which evidently, in this case, can mean no more than a persuasion, that the comfort of life consists in possessing abundance, and for that reason desiring to be rich. This was the covetousness our Lord condemned. To give greater weight to his caution, he represents the love of money working in the heart, by an instance which passes every day before our eyes. A man grows rich, not through extortion or fraud, but industry and skill is his trade; he is delighted with his success, and prospect of being master of an independent fortune in a few years: meanwhile, he is determined to be frugal, till he leaves business, fully to enjoy the sweets of ease and affluence. Luke xii. 19.

What is there, it may be said, to blame in this man's conduct or sentiments? Are they not general, and applauded in every station? Yet our Lord sets this very man before our eyes, as an instance of one engrossed by covetous desires; this man he represents as summoned to appear a criminal at the bar of his despised Maker. Lo, this is the man whom our Lord exposes as a miserable wretch in the midst of all his golden hopes, warning us against the detestable folly of loving money. "So [such a fool and such a sinner as this] is he that layeth up treasure for himself, [every worldly-minded man, who seeks wealth as the foundation of comfort], and is not rich towards God in faith, hope, and love."

St. Paul, writing under the influence of the Holy Ghost, teaches us no less forcibly that the desire of riches is avarice. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii.

On the contrary, he declares defilement of mind and eternal ruin are the certain consequences of loving money. "They that will [*i. e.* have a will] to be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows," 1 Tim. vi.

Now, though it may be deemed no arduous task to keep free from sordid avarice, and accumulation of wealth by scandalous methods, yet, to vanquish the love of money, and deny every propensity to it, must be confessed a heroic instance of self-denial. For when men engage in business, or enter on a profession, how strong are their fears of failing, and their desire of success! What is the constant language of the world? They call riches a blessing, a reward. They pay respect to men nearly in exact proportion to the abundance they possess. In these circumstances, nothing can be more difficult than to resist and conquer the love of money. After using diligently, as we are commanded, industry and skill in our station, cheerfully to leave it in the hands of God to what degree we shall grow rich, and whether ever at all; resting assured, that if we dwell in the land, and do good by a Christian life, our condition upon the whole shall certainly be the very best for us: this is self denial in a high degree.

Nothing can be more contrary to our nature than to act from such noble sentiments as these, whilst

we live in the temple of Mammon, as the world may justly be called, where scholars and philosophers, priests and people, high and low, all pay their adoration to this idol. To live in such a world, free from the love of money, is a deliv<sup>er</sup>ance and victory peculiar to the real members of Christ's church. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ?"

If it should be said, this way of thinking and acting seems to imply that it is wrong for a Christian to gain wealth, I answer, the word of God only condemns the desire of riches as defiling and sinful. But if, whilst your heart is whole with him, he is pleased to make prosper whatever you do, your wealth is plainly his gift, as much as if it came to you by legacy or inheritance. It is the act of God to call you up to a higher station, who was content in your own, and to intrust you with *more* talents to improve for his glory. The difference between gaining wealth put in this manner into your hands, and *desiring to grow rich*, is the same as between a worthless, ambitious intruder into a public post, seeking nothing but his own base interest, and a man sought out from knowledge of his excellency, and invested with the same office, to preserve the common-weal. Those who see no material, no necessary distinction in the two cases, are already blinded by the love of money.

Nor let any deem it useless or severe so strictly to deny every propensity in the heart to this sin. Useless it is not, because we are never secure from the dominion of our passions, but by guarding against the first plausible pleas for their gaining an ascendancy over us. Were we to allow the desire of being richer than the providence of God, unsolicited, sees fit to make us, what a suspicion must we have of his love for us! How soon be insensibly led into

stronger desires to be rich, till every scheme to gratify that desire, not infamous, would be greedily embraced, and the love of the world enthroned in our hearts !

Whereas our heavenly Father, by commanding us to rest with full affiance on his providential goodness, in the diligent discharge of our business, shuts up every pass by which covetousness would approach to enslave us ; and, by a resolute refusal of all correspondence with the enemy, we are guarded against his treachery, no less than his violence. Neither is the self-denial, which extends to suppress even a single wish of having more than is sufficient for the present, irksome ; because our corrupt nature works most to our trouble and vexation, when we are but just within the limits of what is lawful. The liberty and pleasure of the soul enlarge in proportion as it moves out of the neighbourhood of sin, when, instead of regarding its paths as paths of pleasantness, could they be reconciled with duty, we fly from them as pestilent, and are weary even of the faintest suggestions of evil.

Add to this, so far is desire of riches from giving enjoyment of them, that it very soon fills the mind with anxiety. So far from augmenting their comfort who cherish such a desire, that it turns every loss into a grievance, and creates vexation on a thousand occasions, without cause or end ; whilst all the diseases of trade, false weights and measures, extortion and roguery, so loudly complained of and so heavily felt, arise only from hatching this cockatrice egg, love of money ; and, till that is crushed, men will defraud, and injure, and oppress, and devour one another.

## SUNDAY XLIII.

## CHAP. XLIII.

## On Love of Praise.

**CORRUPT** self must be denied in seeking the praise of men. Unless something nobler than earth can give be the grand object of pursuit, praise delights the mind, as sounds exquisitely melodious do a musical ear. The Heathens, with one consent avowed this was the spring of all that gives lustre to their names; and the Pharisees did all their works to be seen of men. Our nature, the very same as theirs, pains us whenever we meet with disrespect. How kneely do expressions of reproach pierce, and how much provoke us! The visible pleasure also with which we listen to our own praise, is most evident, inciting flatterers to practice upon us by their designing arts. This strong innate love of praise and honour from men a Christian must deny. It must be the motives of his conduct, or the end at which he aims, because, whilst this principle sways his mind, the judgment of the world, not the infallible decisions of scripture, will be the rule of his life. In every case he will consider, not what duty or the plain command of God requires, but what will be for his reputation. What will the world think of me? will prove an alarm to his fear, fatal to every intention of living as a Christian must; the fear of appearing an enthusiast by abstaining from fashionable vices, from criminal waste of time, and from profaneness. This will reconcile him in time to things most opposite to his duty. Such a one

may indeed have some knowledge of the truth, but self-love will compel him to hold it in unrighteousness: and he will be more guilty than those who are utterly ignorant of their duty, by stifling his convictions, in order to enjoy the favour of men.

Further, this love of praise will not only lead you inevitably into evil compliances, but utterly *taint* all in you which has the appearance of being good. As base designing courtiers know no other standard to measure their conduct but their prince's pleasure, so will you refuse to avow the belief of any doctrine, or the necessity of any practice, which are not in good repute with the world, even though you know both to be strongly enforced in God's word, as the truth, and only way of salvation.

The love of praise from men, thus opposing our obedience to the will of our Maker, we must deny its pleasing, but treacherous insinuations. For as that word teaches nothing but what is necessary and infinitely beneficial too, we must in all things conform to it. Our single aim and constant ambition must be, to walk before God to all well-pleasing, regardless, whilst we act thus conscientiously, whether men approve or condemn our principles or conduct. If, in the discharge of our duty, and bold confession of the faith of Christ, we meet with praise, as certainly we shall from all who love God, we may take encouragement from thence, and be thankful to him for his grace. If, on the contrary, abuse and contempt are poured on us, we must, unmoved, persevere to offend those whose distempered minds cannot bear fidelity to God. Whatever reluctance we may feel within, we must be proof against all the severe methods used to make love of character work upon us to suppress or damp our zeal for the truth, and the manner of life it obliges us to lead. A noble species of self-denial, in which Chris-

tians distinguish themselves. For though the love of praise be naturally no less sweet to them than to others, yet they have motives sufficient to wean them from seeking it. Jesus Christ, the object of their hope, love, and delight, is present to their mind. They see him not only despised, but outraged, giving his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. Frequent contemplation of this affecting object disposes the mind to bear contempt from the same sort of men who spit upon our Lord. Besides this weighty reason, not to covet the praise of men, who love only what is agreeable to their own false maxims and pursuits, Christians are taught to expect contempt on account of their attachment to Christ, and exhorted neither to be surprised nor discouraged at it.

When all the professing people of God used the same mode of worship, and no opposition was made on account of any supposed innovation in religion, enmity was expressed with great resentment against a truly excellent life. "The wicked seeth the righteous, and gnashing upon them with his teeth. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and bent the bow to slay such as be of upright conversation," Psalm xxxvii. When the publication of the gospel is foretold, the Almighty exhorts all who should be disposed to obey it not to suffer love of praise, or fear of shame, to make them renounce or dissemble their faith. "Harken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings," Isaiah li. 7. When Jesus himself delineates the graces which adorn and distinguish his faithful followers, viz. humility, meekness, love of righteousness, purity, and mercy, he immediately adds, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you for righteousness sake." For he knew

the character, though a beautiful resemblance of his own, would upbraid men of partial superficial virtue, and gall those of a corrupt life.

These instructions strongly aid a sense of our duty to seek only the honour that cometh from God; and are of great efficacy to cool the heart, which would otherwise burn for reputation. While Christians are thus studying only to be approved of God, their singleness of intention, according to that gracious promise, is rewarded with the light of truth, love, and holiness, in which they enjoy more than a recompence for the loss of human praise, or the contempt poured on their understanding, choice, and conduct.

Further, self must be denied in our enjoyment of lawful comforts. Intemperance, lewdness, covetousness, and vain-glory, are in every degree defiling and sinful. Nothing can be urged in their defence by those who believe the Bible, or reason justly. But, after these corruptions of heart are conquered, there remains much exercise for self-denial. Our hearts must be disengaged from temporal blessings, which have no intrinsic worth, that we may receive the benefit they were intended to give, without putting our peace in their power. And considering how very uncertain all outward comforts are, and how impossible it is to secure the enjoyment of them, our interest, no less than duty, requires that we should sit loose to them.

Amongst these lawful comforts, in which self must be denied, our dearest relations are included: for though much love is due to them, and a great tenderness of affection, from whence much pleasure springs, still God alone must possess our chief love. But without a jealous watch, when our affection is tender as it ought to be, it will soon intrench upon what we owe to him, and render us lukewarm.

Excessive love for a husband, wife, or child, will prove as fatal to the soul, and as injurious to God, as excessive love of money, wine, or voluptuousness. It will enslave us to an idol, which we shall studiously seek to please, and be fearful to offend above all things. Our happiness will center in this short-lived precarious idol, and its removal prove a stroke too heavy to bear with Christian submission. The danger of this inordinate affection with respect to nobler objects than the covetous, aspiring, or lewd pursue, is expressly mentioned in scripture, and self-denial in this instance enjoined. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children," (as much renounce all fondness for them which would hinder faithfulness in my service, and supreme love to my person, as if he hated them), "he cannot be my disciple, his heart cannot be whole with me," Luke xiv.

St. Paul inculcates the same degree of self-denial respecting our dearest earthly comforts, founding his doctrine on an everlasting reason. "Brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep [for the loss of them], as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away;" 1 Cor. vii. Short-lived as we are ourselves, our best earthly comforts are often still shorter in their duration. Wherefore we act only according to the truth of our condition in obeying God by moderating our affections towards all that are upon the earth. By this means we shall receive the comfort they are able to give, and still enjoy life in a separation from them when that takes place. The unchangeable all-suffi-

cient God will be our treasure, and the failure of the cisterns which too may hew out for themselves, will enhance the more to us the fountain of living waters. To comprehend, with a more lively impression, the excellent advantage of being thus disengaged from inordinate affection towards objects very dear to us, look upon the fond mother, stupid and dumb with grief, refusing, like Rachel, to be comforted because her child is gone, and harbouring hard thoughts of the adorable God, who gives and takes away as he pleases. Turn to other objects. Observe the settled melancholy which oppresses them. They have lost, by a sudden stroke, the husband or wife of their youth, in whom they promised themselves years of joy. They see their happiness shivered all in pieces, and by the interment of the idol on which they doated, the whole creation is become to them a desert; the comforts others enjoy in the married state aggravate their anguish, and all their refuge is in the gloomy thought, that death will soon deliver them.

These afflicting scenes, which so often present themselves, prove, no act of duty can be more reasonable or necessary than that of resisting and suppressing all inordinate love towards our dear relations. Who can say they shall not be torn from us in a moment? And then, if we have delighted ourselves in them beyond measure, they will surely pierce us through with many pangs for their loss; pangs which will not only cut us off from heavenly consolations, but fill us with murmurings against God, bringing upon us his heavy displeasure.

## SUNDAY XLIV.

## CHAP. XLIV.

## On evil Shame.

**SELF** must be denied in overcoming evil shame. We all naturally follow custom and fashion, and, though not fired with love of fame, we still feel it grievous to be reproached as a bigot, a fool, an enthusiast. Wherefore, when men observe that an appearance of seriousness or attachment to scripture principles, in condemnation of corrupt practices and fashionable errors, will make them pass as disagreeable persons, unfit for polite company till they gain more liberal notions, they are *afraid* of religion. Pride strongly pleads not to come forward as friends to the truth of God, where it is despised, but appear approvers of every thing in the mode, though we condemn it in our heart.

This evil shame must be denied in all its workings, because it is base, a great encouragement to iniquity, and destructive to our own souls.

Nothing can be baser than a dastardly obsequiousness to the opinions of men. It not only speaks the dominion cowardice has over us, but it is a most ungrateful return for more knowledge than others have attained. Did God give you this knowledge, to which thousands are strangers, that you might affront and put the greater indignity upon him, by preferring your own paltry reputation to his favour? that you might appear dark as the world in your understanding, rather than bear ridicule from the foes of truth, only foes because their deeds are

evil? Where must a soldier, ashamed of his king or service, appear? Yet what fidelity does he owe his king, what advantage does he reap in his service, worthy to be named with your ties of duty to the Lord over all, or with the benefits he hath poured out upon you? Both justice and gratitude, therefore, oblige us all, as far as we know the truth, and our duty, to avow both, and not be ashamed of being counted righteous over-much, by men who have nothing more than the senseless form of godliness, if so much as even that.

Besides, till we stand forth advocates for the cause of God and Christian practice, in a manner becoming our condition in life, we contribute to the increase of wickedness. What all men either do themselves, or express no abhorrence of in others, we naturally conclude can have no great harm in it. Thus at length all sense of Christian religion is banished from society, and vice and profaneness triumph, all their deformity in the public judgment being lost.

These pernicious evils would be certainly prevented, if the fear of shame and reproach for God's sake, was resolutely vanquished. Inferiors may with modesty express a disapproving silence, or a cool reserve against vice and profaneness; and where age, rank, or condition authorize, open and sharp rebukes of all that is immoral and irreligious are necessary to keep up the distinction of good and evil, duty and transgression.

By this means, men are reminded of their dependence upon God. And often a word spoken in maintenance of his cause is by his grace made effectual to awaken the conscience, and change the heart. But if, from mean self-love and fear of losing favour with worldly men, we refuse by any of these methods to testify our sense of God's authority,

to confess our belief of his truth, hatred of sin, and love of holiness, we become accessories to the abounding of iniquity. For a tame spectator of insults offered to his Maker, and an unconcerned witness of those hard speeches which ungodly sinners are wont to speak against him, will ever be judged by the offenders themselves to join in their sentiments, at least to see nothing detestable in them.

But if neither gratitude for a multitude of mercies from God, nor fear of strengthening and increasing the workers of iniquity, can prevail against our natural cowardice in his cause, we are taught to oppose fear to fear; to weigh against the shame of being reproached by men, the insufferable pain of everlasting contempt from God and angels. For immediately after the injunction of that self-denial, without which it is impossible to follow Christ, the trying instance of losing our character for his sake is pointed out. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny also before my Father which is in heaven," Mark viii. 38.

Not that we must draw back even from severer trials, than loss of character. We must take up our cross, and forsake all, sooner than desert our duty, or renounce our faith. To this trial the far greater part of mankind are constantly called, though the sword of superstition is sheathed, and the burning of heretics is held in general detestation. For men have no less fear of being starved than of being tied to the stake. Now, the dependence all inferior ranks of men have upon the great and opulent, make them conclude they can never prosper without their countenance and favour. When a young man opens his

shop, or enters on the profession of law, physic, or divinity, how desirable to be employed by the rich, or to have their smile, and be admitted as a welcome guest to their table ! Who can gain considerably unless in cities of commerce, or rise to eminence in any profession, without their interest ? Hence arises a most violent temptation, which very few have integrity and fortitude to withstand ; a temptation on no account to be disagreeable to the great and wealthy, or to their principal domestic, by whom so much may be got or lost. Are they therefore profane ? Not only the tradesman, but the lawyer, physician, and divine, will be afraid of confessing the faith, or practising the duty of a Christian. Are they lewd and intemperate ? How rare to find either tradesman, lawyer, physician, or divine, who will risk his worldly interest by frowning upon their impiety, revelling, lasciviousness, and excess, or dare to utter one word in condemnation of such vile conduct ! Against the remonstrances of conscience, self-interest will lead a man carefully to avoid displeasing his best customers, his most profitable clients, or patients, or perhaps his only patron, who can raise him in the church.

No one can deny, that the principal inhabitants in every place keep the vast multitude of their inferiors in awe ; noblemen and gentlemen of large estate keep in awe all who want to make their fortune. And farmers and tradesmen, all who earn their bread under them. And where superiors are earthly and sensual, scarcely will you find their dependents more religious than themselves. This is one of the chief obstacles to the success of the gospel. In this situation, Christian self-denial displays its energy. Every real believer in Christ will dare to shew inviolable regard to the truth and law of God, though certain the rich or great will take offence at him on

that account. Fear of falling, or of want, will not betray him to dissemble, or deny his duty. Whilst on the one hand discretion and humility preserve him from irritating the profane by improper rebuke or forward behaviour, fear and love of God, on the other, will certainly lead him to bear some testimony against such lawless conduct, and such contempt poured on the revelation of peace and truth.

The weight which eternal things have in the believer's mind, the smart he has often felt in his conscience for seeming to approve what he knew God has condemned; the express command that all Christians shall publicly profess their faith, and the sufferings Christ endured to obtain his eternal redemption, join their influence, and fortify his mind sooner to risk the loss of all, than be ashamed of God and his word. And though such an opposition to impious custom (decent, rational, and noble as it is) extremely terrifies man, yet those who are bold to make it, submitting to God in diligence and integrity to provide for them, generally prosper: for they are heirs of the unconquerable promise: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and I will receive you, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," 2 Cor. vi.

And if any man, professing himself a Christian, dare not thus rely upon God for temporal provision, though it seems to be endangered by adherence to his duty, let not that man deceive himself—his profession is like that of the traitors, he is an arrant infidel in his heart, and his actions prove it. Nay, worse than infidelity is chargeable upon him: an horrid idea of God, which, were it entertained by his children and friends of himself, would be a dagger to his heart:—an idea that God can see, and not deliver his own child in distresses brought on him from cor-

dial love to his heavenly Father's name, though all power lie in his hands to reward and bless. Such a one, O fearful professor, dost thou conceive the God of heaven and earth to be.



## SUNDAY XLV.

### CHAP. XLV.

On self-denied Submission of our Understanding to God's Word.

**T**HIS is a restraint no less difficult for men of superior understanding to brook, than for the sensual to live in chastity, the covetous to be liberal, or the fearful to be bold for God and duty. Yet, in requiring such submission to his naked word, he requires nothing unreasonable, because the objects of faith exceed human comprehension, and at present are revealed only in part. "We preach," saith the apostle, "the wisdom of God in a mystery." Therefore, scripture must not be rejected under pretence that it contradicts common sense. Instead of indulging, we must repel that insolent query, How can these things be? For, as ignorant creatures, it is our duty, as Christians our profession, to believe what God has declared. And when his declaration is made, we must shut our eyes against numberless difficulties relating to the manner how things exist, to which human wit and human ignorance may give birth. This is our duty, though mortifying infinitely to men of science, who are arrogant from conceit of their abilities and penetration. For, how can any

one have reason to deny or doubt that to be true (which involves no palpable contradiction), when our Maker hath affirmed it? Or, how can one be sure there is a *real contradiction* in things, which it is certain, and even confessed, he cannot thoroughly comprehend? Though reason, therefore, be of signal service in teaching us, to a certain degree, the knowledge of causes and effects, and, within its proper limits, is never to be disparaged, yet, under the influence of self-conceit and arrogance, it proves no less an enemy to God and man than the vilest of our passions. For it will teach us to disdain the notion of implicit faith even in our Maker, and to urge the supposed absurdity of scripture-doctrines, and their repugnancy to preconceived opinions, as sufficient to reject them, till the whole of revelation be denied. First the incarnation of God; then, his atonement; after these, the fall, man's natural corruption, and the agency of the Holy Ghost; till at last scarce any doctrine in the Bible is allowed to be true, but what a Deist would receive\*.

Should it be said, implicit faith lays us open to all absurdities, under pretence of reverence for the authority of God; the answer is obvious; a distinction

\* The sufficiency of reason is an idea most flattering, which we therefore receive before we are aware of the consequence. Yet is it necessary that we should be gradually led on to this belief, before we can consider the authority of reason as decisive. Were we at *first* taught it is superior to the revelation of God in his word, we should be shocked; but when artfully conducted step by step to the belief of our own consequence, and cautioned against giving credit to any thing our reason does not comprehend, which is said to be the infallible test of truth, that very reason which, under due restriction, would have helped to preserve man from error, when exalted and trusted in as sufficient of itself, will infallibly sink him into the lowest dregs of it. For no sooner does reason hesitate to determine for him, than he becomes a sceptic; confounded in his further inquiries, he degenerates into an infidel avowed, or covert.

must be made between the time, before we are persuaded the Bible is of God, and after we know it to be so. Before, we have full liberty to put to the severest trial all the evidences which demonstrate the scripture is a revelation from God. Every one capable of this inquiry should do so, because these proofs are palpable, and make their appeal *to our reason*, which is fully qualified to judge of the truth of facts. During the whole time these proofs are under examination, reason is to sit sole arbitress; but when once the scripture is received, as it always must be when men are honest in their search, it *immediately* claims absolute submission to its doctrines. After this, should we pretend that reason authorizes us to question any truth the book contains, we are self-condemned, because it is the height both of folly and arrogance to urge against an infallible teacher the repugnancy of what he affirms to our own ideas. On the contrary, when once the book is acknowledged to be of God, it instantly becomes an act of the highest treason to rely entirely upon scripture testimony.

That it is the duty of a Christian in this manner to deny the arrogance natural to men of superior understanding, the following declaration proves: "I will destroy the wisdom, of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" 1 Cor. i. The absolute contrariety which scripture truth bears to what the wisest men naturally conceive it is *fit* God should reveal, is affirmed, when it is said, "the wisdom of God is foolishness to men." This doctrine, so mortifying to those who lean to their own understanding, Christ remarkably confirms; for he rejoiced in spirit, that those who, like little children, sub-

mitted to believe whatever the word of God teaches, enjoyed the inestimable blessing of divine knowledge, able to save their souls; whilst men who idolized their own intellectual abilities were incapable of understanding the truth. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," Matth. xi.

St. Paul urges the same self-denial, when he affirms, "If any man think himself wise, let him become a fool [in his own judgment, as much in need of being taught every thing], that he may be wise." And he particularly teaches us, that this self-denial is effected by apostolic preaching, wherever it succeeds to the salvation of the hearer. "It casts down imaginations [corrupt reasonings, corrupt because impious, where the word of God hath decided] and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Such assertions can have neither use nor meaning, but to suppress that sceptical daring spirit, which too many dignify as the just exercise of reason, and a noble freedom of inquiry, in opposition to the authority of established creeds.

Nor would there have been such assertions in scripture, were there not in us, when we possess superior understanding, cultivated by much reading, a propensity to make articles of religion for ourselves, though in fact it is impossible to know the things of God, any farther than we are taught them from his own mouth. Believers in Christ must constantly guard against this abuse of reason and learning, and not dare, through difficulties which may be started, to cavil with the scripture.

It is absolutely necessary our understanding

should thus submit to the authority of God's word, because a man can never be a Christian without it. Since every doctrine peculiar to the church of Christ, if we will not give full credit to the revealer, hath in it insuperable difficulties, pride, aided by a small degree of penetration, will find endless matter to arraign the scripture in its account of the origin of our misery; its character of the Redeemer, and his incarnation; of the Spirit's agency; of the penalty incurred by every transgression, and the punishment of all who are damned. These several capital articles of our creed, must be received upon the mere authority of their voucher, the written word, or not at all. And those who disdain to acquiesce in such testimony do and must deny the faith of Christ in their hearts, though, for obvious reasons, they choose to call themselves Christians, and to remain in the bosom of Christ's church, though infidels to all intents and purposes.

Self must be denied in rejecting all hope towards God, built upon our own righteousness. This is a severe instance of mortification to us all, much beyond any that has been insisted on. Yet, whatever our good qualities may be, however great and shining our attainments in grace, we must confess before God, our eternal condemnation would be inevitable, should our Maker enter into judgment with us, instead of showing us compassion, and loving us freely. For how is it possible we can honour the sacrifice of Christ as God would have it honoured, if we fancy our own goodness can ever absolve us from guilt? How can we flee for refuge to the Saviour, and abide in him as our strong tower, unless we *always* see ourselves exposed to the avenger of blood, if not protected and justified freely through the redemption that is in him? How can we, in fervent self-abasing gratitude, bow down to God for imput-

ing to us his righteousness, if we renounce not our own as utterly insufficient to answer for us at his bar? Or how can we place our *whole* dependence on the Beloved of the Father for acceptance in him, unless conscious, to our last moment on earth, that we never can be justified or deemed righteous for our own obedience?

From these reasons, (not to be set aside, through the many evasions pride, aided by much subtlety, hath contrived), a Christian denies his self in a degree no earth-born system of religion requires. And though this very humbling estimation of our moral excellence be the most difficult of all things to attain, yet scripture strongly urges it upon us, both by example and doctrine. Job cries out, "Behold! I am vile, I abhor myself." Upon inquiry, we find this accuser of himself had not, even in the judgment of God, his equal in moral goodness upon the whole earth. Yet the fault he bewailed, and which extorted his confession, was too high an opinion of his own worth: he had said, "I am clean without transgression; I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me;" Job xxxiii. 9. And for thus overrating his spiritual attainments, he loathes himself in his own eyes. Who now (receiving the scripture testimony borne to Job's character) can think himself less sullied with evil, or less defective in duty, than this illustrious child of God?

What Job was in old time, St. Paul evidently appears to have been in the Christian church. Who, in labours or sufferings for the glory of God, who, in love to God or man, in purity of heart and conversation, or extensive usefulness, can be compared with him? Yet so far is this most distinguished saint and apostle of Christ, from confiding in his moral excellence, or fancying it the ground in any degree of his justification before God, that he enu-

merates what he had done and suffered for Christ's sake. *only* that he might shew how utterly he disclaimed it all as the foundation of his hope towards God. He poured contempt upon it, calling it loss and dung, in comparison of being found in Christ, "not having his own righteousness, which is of the law [*i. e.* not trusting in his own obedience for justification], but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith;" Phil. iii.

What these and other most excellent persons, recorded in Holy Writ, declare in disparagement of their own righteousness, is confirmed as a doctrine of great importance by several passages. The poor and needy are represented as the only objects of the Redeemer's grace, Ps. lxxii. Whilst the good and virtuous in their own eyes "are scattered in the proud imagination of their hearts, and sent empty away," Luke i. A lowly mind is described as the *only* temper becoming our Christian profession, whilst the haughty spirit which prompts men to trust in their own righteousness, is expressed as the *only* cause of excluding from salvation, even those who had a zeal for God; Romans ix. By doctrine therefore, by examples, and by his own experience of numberless defects, every believer in Jesus is led to call himself vile in the midst of his highest attainments, and constantly to esteem himself a needy impotent vessel of mercy, who has nothing to delight in but the name of the Lord, nor ground of confidence towards God but his righteousness.

Compare this extensive self-denial, practised by the true members of Christ's church, with what either enthusiasm or superstition have, under that name, enjoined. The contrast is striking indeed. How frivolous and despicable to make self-denial (as weak enthusiasts do) consist in the shape or col-

our of our clothes, in demure looks and precise behaviour, or abstaining *only* from fashionable diversions! These things hypocrites may do, and shine as patterns of such mortification, whilst self, in its worst tempers, is fully indulged. The self-denial which stern superstition enjoins is worse. It imprisons for life men and women, endued with *active* powers, and formed for society: it makes them move like clock-work in a round of religious rites; it clothes them with sackcloth, and orders them to practise many useless severities upon the body; it calls them to desert the very station in which Providence had fixed their lot, and buries even the excellencies they have in a cloister and a cell.

Examined by the rule of scripture, how mistaken, how pitiable, how unprofitable is the zeal of such devotees! On the contrary, what a just understanding, what fortitude of mind, what personal and public benefits are conspicuous in Christian self-denial!

It teaches us to use the plenty of meats and drinks given us by divine bounty, without any abuse of them; thus confronting by our example, and severely condemning all excess. It teaches us to enjoy the rich comforts of the marriage-state, and the various pleasures which spring from the chaste union of the sexes, and a well-governed family, infinitely outweighing all that lust enthroned in a filthy heart can boast. It enables us to carry on trade without covetousness, though every incitement to that sordid passion surrounds us. In the reciprocal exercise of tender affection between dearest relations and friends, it secures the supreme love of the heart for God. It teaches us to avow his cause, and adhere to it, in contempt of our worldly interest, our honour, and our character. It teaches us to sacrifice our prying curiosity, and desire of comprehending

fully the truths of God before we believe them, to the veneration we owe his oracles. And after an intrepid venture of all for his sake, it teaches us, instead of eyeing with self-complacency our moral excellence, to cry, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord."

This extensive, most noble self-denial, is sufficient.—Away then with the unnatural life of the convent; away with all the inventions of will-worship, silence, and total solitude, hair shirts, iron girdles, and the coarsest food. Away with all the whimsical uncommanded singularities in dress, and the fashion of the exterior man, which enthusiasts so violently press. It is far severer self-denial to mortify every evil and corrupt desire natural to the heart. It is more courageous to fight till we die, than fly from the battle. It is more profitable to mankind to shine a light before their eyes, than to be immured with a select company, as if piety could not live in the commerce of the world. And it is infinitely more for the glory of Christ, that the new heart and new spirit which he hath given should be known and seen of all men, than be buried in perpetual concealment. Most useful, honourable, and excellent, are they who deny all the cravings of corrupt self in the midst of forbidden objects. They, and they alone, prove the efficacy of the Saviour's prayer in their behalf: "Father, take them not out of the world, but keep them from the evil."

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## PRAYER,

Suited to the preceding Subject.

O LORD, the author and continual preserver of our being, thou hast an absolute right

over us. We are thy property ; to thee, and for thee only, ought we to live. But we confess our shame, our misery, and sin. We have impiously exalted ourselves, and treated thy eternal majesty as unworthy our regard. Professing ourselves Christians, we have refused to deny ourselves, to take up our cross and follow thee. We have cherished the desires of our corrupt nature. We have encouraged those vile affections, which we ought to have bewailed, opposed, and strangled in their birth. We have obstinately thought the happiness of man's life was in fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind; and our whole aim has been to please ourselves. Hold up, O Lord, before our eyes this melancholy truth, that holy shame may cover us; that we may return to thee our God with weeping and supplication. O blot out all our sins for his righteousness sake, who pleased not himself, but came, in the body thou hadst prepared for him, to do thy will. By him may we be sanctified, and delivered from the wrath due to us for all our self-indulgence.

We have now heard our duty explained and urged, that we must mortify all our evil and corrupt appetites. O give us to beware of surfeiting and drunkenness. May we eat for strength, not for gratification, and drink for thirst, not to inflame ourselves with wine, wherein is excess. By thy grace, may we always keep under our bodies, and resist every lewd desire or thought. Suffer us not to look upon a woman to lust after her; inspire us with hatred of all foolish talking and filthy jesting, all sights, books, and amusements, which defile and war against the soul. Convince us that thou wilt judge all whoremongers and adulterers, and that no lewd person shall enter into thy kingdom.

Enable us to overcome the love of the world, and all desire of wealth and greatness. May we be con-

tent with such things as we have, and let our whole conversation be without covetousness. Give us grace to conquer the love of money, which is the root of all evil. Keep us ever satisfied with thyself, O God, as our portion, and never suffer us to indulge so much as a single wish for any thing in this world, more than food and raiment. Deliver us from the pride of our hearts, which thirsts for praise and honour from men. Let all our ambition be to please thee. Let us not fear the faces of men, nor be afraid of their revilings. Make us bold to maintain thy honour, and ready on every fit occasion with meekness to witness a good confession of thy truth, and our duty.

Set our hearts at liberty from all inordinate affection for those we love, and to whom we are dear; and may we never provoke thee to jealousy by honouring them above thy divine majesty. Save us from all conceit of our own understanding, and from cavilling at the doctrines thy infallible word teaches. And whatever we have done for thee, or received at thy hands, let each of us make this request living and dying, God be merciful to me a sinner, for his sake who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. *Amen.*

## SUNDAY XLVI.

## CHAP. XLVI.

## On devotional Duties.

**WHEN** the practice and tempers essential to Christians are explained, too many cry out, Who then can be saved? There is really no place in the Christian scheme for such despondency. Though our natural weakness and corruption be much greater than such objectors believe, still Christian obedience springs from a root sufficient to produce it all. For God, the mighty God, hath promised light, power, and consolation to those who seek them in Christ Jesus, sufficient to maintain every holy temper in the measure required.

The means which must be used with diligence and perseverance, to obtain these supernatural supplies, are called, by way of distinction, Devotional Duties, and, in every one's judgment, are essential to religion. Yet, through sad self-abuse, devotional duties in general are mere religious formalities, which dishonour God, lull nominal Christians into a false peace, and harden the profane in their contempt of religion itself. To guard against an error so pernicious, I shall treat at large on the nature of devotional duties, and the right method of performing them; confining myself principally to secret prayer, and reading the word of God; as what will be offered on these two capital parts of devotion bears an easy application to all public ordinances, and other means of grace.

With respect to prayer, the object of it is God alone, because the end of prayer, is to obtain deliverance or preservation from evil, or the possession of good; therefore our application must be made to him from whom every good and perfect gift cometh; who orders all things according to the counsel of his own will, able completely to bless us in spite of all opposition; and without whose favour the whole creation cannot afford either protection or comfort. Joined with uncontrollable power, the attributes of omnipresence and omniscience are essential to the true object of prayer, in order that not one supplicant should be overlooked; not one of the numberless millions of petitions offered up in the same instant throughout the world be lost; and that, amidst the infinite variety of complicated cases, the things best for each individual, and those only, should be conferred. United with these perfections, there must be mercy and love to forgive our sins, to overcome our fears, and encourage our petitions, conscious as we must be of our own vileness when we are fit to pray.

Thus, from the nature of prayer, it is evident we must address ourselves to God alone. We are taught the same in his oracles. "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion, and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." Psal. lxxv. "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God," Exod. xx.

A truth so plain, so important, so often repeated in scripture, that the monstrous corruptions of wor-

ship introduced by popery, are matter of astonishment, no less than lamentation. Instead of making God the only object of their trust, papists have besides him almost innumerable saints and angels, and from each, they tell us, they are to receive some benefit in answer to their prayers. They tell us there are above advocates and patrons for all exigencies and occasions, who defend men from dangers and diseases, and bestow favours and virtues. They tell us, we are to apply to these patrons, without troubling God the Father and the Redeemer, who is God, by presuming, upon every occasion, to make immediate addresses to them.

A horrid superstition; at once confuted, when you know what perfections are essential to the object of our prayers. Where is almighty power, infinite understanding, and omnipresence, but in the eternal God? How absurd then and impious to call on those for help, who by nature are no gods; so limited as to be incapable of knowing what we want, or bestowing what we ask?

Our prayers should generally \* (if we exactly follow the scripture rule) be addressed to the Father, in dependence upon the sacrifice and mediation of the Son, and the influence of the Spirit. In this manner of address, the distinct part each person of the Godhead bears in the salvation of sinners, the infinite purity of God, and our own defilement to

\* I say generally, for there are numerous instances of prayer addressed to Jesus Christ. The disciples prayed to him, *increase our faith*—the dying malefactor, to save his soul. Stephen, with his dying breath, commended himself into his hands. Paul besought him thrice to take away the thorn in his flesh, and styles him Lord over all, rich in mercy to all that call upon him; for, whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved. These are precedents (never to be set aside) proving that each member of the Christian church may and will say, as Thomas did to Jesus, My Lord and my God.

the last, are forcibly taught ; points of such moment, that all scripture labours to impress them on our minds.

Now, as God is the only object to whom we must pray, so prayer is the spreading before him the wants and desires we feel. Without this, the best chosen petitions repeated punctually every morning and evening out of a book, or the greatest fluency of expression, are only the mimicry of prayer. A sort of devotion, which the proud and self-sufficient, and most grossly ignorant, can practise ; on which the formal and superstitious can fancy themselves religious in an extraordinary degree, though they never prayed once since they were born. For as the needy only can stoop to ask alms, so we begin to pray, and not before, when we feel ourselves ready to perish, if we receive not the things we ask for.

This sensibility of real want, scripture representations and examples prove essential to prayer. "If thou shalt seek the Lord, thou shalt find him ; if thou seekest him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul," Deut. iv. "Trust in God at all times ; pour out your hearts before him," Ps. lxii. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth," Ps. cxlv. 18. When the inspired Solomon commands us to pray for wisdom, he emphatically expresses the need we must feel of that gift. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure." Our Lord points out the same feeling as essential to prayer ; he describes it by *asking, seeking, knocking* : terms which express a pungent need of help, and an immediate answer. St. James, holding out the very same idea, calls successful petition inwrought prayer. What scripture thus defines to be prayer, the practice of God's saints illustrates.

When they came before the throne of grace, they were penetrated with the feeling of their necessities. "With my whole heart have I sought thy favour. At evening, and at morning, and at noon-day, will I cry, and that instantly; and thou shalt hear me." See another example of the distress and importunity of a true supplicant: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord: Lord hear my voice. O let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication." In the address of Daniel, greatly beloved, every syllable breathes sense of want, which scarce knows how to bear the least denial or delay. "O Lord hear, O Lord forgive: O Lord hearken, and do; defer not for thine own sake, O my God."

From this scripture representation of prayer, that it means spreading the wants we feel before God, it is plain, all men stand perfectly on a level in their natural state, as to any ability to pray. Outward circumstances here make no difference. A polished scholar and an ignorant clown; those who have been most piously trained, and those who have been brought up profanely; those who have been kept back from sinful excesses, and those who have plunged most deeply into them, if no other difference takes place, remain alike strangers to real prayer. For, notwithstanding the gross ignorance, and bad education, and profligate manners, soon as ever the sting of sin is felt, and its tyranny oppresses the soul, prayers and cries will ascend up to God from a humble troubled heart. On the contrary, where the guilt, strength, and defilement of sin are not painfully felt, neither learning nor pious education, nor abstinence from all vice, will enable any one to pray. In many instances, these advantages blind and flatter by their specious appearance; in all, they are entirely distinct from conviction of sin, and every alarming apprehension of its issue, unless par-

done and subdued. For all true knowledge and just apprehensions of sin, wherever found, are owing to an infinitely higher cause. They are the effect of a firm belief in God's word, declaring the sinfulness of sin, and a heart so humbled as to plead guilty to the charge of it. But it is not in the power of good education much less of learning, to produce either. They are the gifts of God: gifts no sooner received, than all impediments to prayer vanish. Want immediately makes the stammering tongue of the unlearned, or of those who have been in time past most wicked, speak plain enough in the ears of God. Want makes the heart, which was before too gross to conceive any excellency in the things of God, seek after them with earnest cries. And whatever difference good understanding, pious education, or general abstinence from vice, may make in the "matter of confession, the degrees of guilt, or the choice of words," still the prayer which God accepts, and answers with a blessing to the soul, will be exactly the same in the little sinner, as in the great; in the poor as in the rich; in the lowest and weakest of the people, as in the most accomplished preacher of God's truth.

May this scriptural account of prayer undeceive many who presume they stand accepted with their Maker on account of their multiplying exercises of devotion, when instead of feeling themselves sinful, impotent creatures, as their prayers constantly represent them to be, fancy they are righteous, and swell with conceit of superior goodness, because they so often repeat prayers, and so punctually frequent the church. May this scripture account of prayer encourage all who feel their own vileness, *whatever* they have been, to make their confession, and pour out their complaints before God, though their utterance or knowledge be very defective, and such as

men would despise, and though their past lives have been most profligate. May this scripture account of prayer convince also poor people it is mere hypocrisy and love of darkness, because their deeds are evil, when they pretend they cannot pray, because they cannot read a letter—for nothing but contempt of God's word, and denial of our sinful condition as represented in that word, leave either learned or unlearned under such hardness of heart, as to feel no want of grace, mercy, and peace from God, consequently unable to pray.

Further, it is plain from the nature of prayer, as it means spreading our wants before God, that a real concern for salvation will excite prayer at all times, and in all places. We shall pray when about our business and in company, unseen by every human eye, as really as when alone, or in our closet. Frequent ejaculations (*i. e.* prayers darted up to heaven) will be the necessary consequence of longing desires in the heart towards God, and the remembrance of his name.—In proportion as we love an object, our thoughts and wishes ever follow and fix upon it.

We proceed from the nature, to consider the subject matter of prayer, or what wants we are to spread before the Lord. Certainly they must be only such as becomes him to supply, as we are warranted by his own word to make known to him, and assured by his promise, either absolutely or with limitation, that he will relieve.

We may ask temporal blessings; ease when in racking pain; health when pining sickness has taken us off from our employment, or wasted our strength; a maintenance, that we be not left destitute. We may ask the continuance of our own lives, and the lives of our dearest relations and friends, when in danger. Prayer may be made to God for each of these benefits; because instances of each are record-

ed in scripture; because, by imploring them, we exalt God as the sovereign Lord of life, and all its comforts: and thus our absolute dependence upon him is confirmed, and our gratitude for his favours increased.

But though it be lawful to pray for any of these benefits, we must do it always with submission to the will of God, provided he sees it best to give what we ask; always remembering that things of this kind are promised only on condition that they are for the glory of God, and our good; always remembering that ease, health, maintenance, friends, and life itself, are things unspeakably mean, compared with spiritual and eternal blessings.

Indeed a real Christian can never desire things temporal as his chief good, yet it is very proper to ask them of our Maker, because many who have first prayed only for the removal of some temporal evil, or the continuance of some temporal good, have been led, by God's gracious answer, to seek his kingdom and righteousness with their whole heart.

But spiritual and eternal blessings must be the chief matter of a Christian's petition. He must ask for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and for pardon through his blood.—He must pray that he may comprehend, with all saints, the breadth and length, and height and depth of his love, that he may mortify every vile affection, and bear a brighter conformity to his image.

These are the grand things of which all Christians feel their want, which they pursue with ardour, and daily wait upon God to receive in a more abundant measure.

Besides this general matter of prayer, common to the whole church of Christ, each private believer finds particular matter for himself suggested from

his own trials, the frame of his mind, and the appointments of Providence respecting him. Every alteration in either of these particulars produces some correspondent want in the man. Therefore, as real prayer is spreading our wants before God, the petitions which may be very proper to-day will be quite unsuitable to our case to-morrow; and what was sufficient in certain circumstances will in opposite ones be deplorably defective. Consequently the matter of our private prayers must rise out of the objects and occurrences around us, and the impressions which they make upon us. For as different temptations present themselves, different will be the working of corruption. Sometimes we shall feel pride, envy, and self-preference; at others, impatience, anger, discontent, or peevishness. Now impure thoughts may be excited, then love of praise, evil surmisings, and uncharitable conclusions, or lusting after money. According to these frequent and important variations, our petitions must be adapted for pardon, deliverance, and the aids of grace. And though such an admirable form of public worship as ours, comprehending every particular case, which, quick as thought, each individual will for himself perceive, is profitable in the highest degree; yet in secret, before God, it seems no less improper to use a form of prayer which another has composed, than to procure a person to tell for us, to the physician, our own pains and feelings in sickness. These we can tell to another, why not to the physician himself?

Particular assistances are also needful, according to our station in life, and the snares to which we are exposed on that account. The rich and noble stand in the midst of dangers peculiar to themselves; men in trade and merchandise have very much to fear from their business; whilst pastors and teachers, in

order to be pure from the blood of those committed to their charge, need a great measure of wisdom, love, and zeal.

It is, therefore, by no means sufficient, that we ask of God those things which he commands men to seek, and has promised to bestow, unless we also specify what we in particular now want. We must derive our petitions not only from the teaching of the word, and a knowledge of things necessary for us as Christians, but from our own feelings and desires. And unless our state of heart does of itself dictate to us the matter of our prayer, there is no reason to think we are in earnest. For if our sins and corruptions were grievous, surely we should confess them. If they were odious in our own eyes, surely we should be very particular and urgent in requesting of God to subdue them.

Besides, it appears scarcely possible to guard effectually against formality in prayer, unless it be used as a simple, constant application to God, for the supply of our daily and peculiar wants. Nor is it any objection to say, very few, in comparison, have ability to adapt good words to their particular cases, proper for others to hear: Granted—Yet every one is sufficiently qualified to do this alone before God, who seeth the heart. Here false grammar, frequent hesitations and repetitions, are in no degree detrimental or inconvenient; nor phrases at which men might take offence as coarse and low, the least improper. When the desire of the heart, and intention of the soul are pure, the prayer is a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. And he most meanly conceives of the divine majesty and perfections, who supposes God is pleased at all with elegant, nervous words, or fluent expression, or with any thing but the prayer of the upright; which a day-labourer is as able and likely

at least to offer unto him, as any admired speaker or eminent scholar.

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## SUNDAY XLVII.

### CHAP. XLVII.

On the Necessity of Prayer.

**WHAT** was offered in the preceding chapter will make plain, to the meanest capacity, the nature and the matter of real prayer. But ignorance, alas! is the weakest obstacle to this duty we have to remove; aversion to such spiritual, soul-humbling confession, and natural profaneness, are much more difficult to overcome. For this end let us consider in what manner scripture urges the *necessity* of prayer.

It is enforced in that divine book, by the practice of the most venerable persons, as the only means of obtaining grace to pay uniform obedience to God, as required by his command.

It is enforced by the most venerable names, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, Daniel, Peter, and Paul; the first names for excellency before God were constant in prayer. This enlivened their graces, and gave them such transcendent lustre. But their diligence in the duty of prayer is not recorded to give them the trifling honour of a posthumous fame; it is designed to prove that we must do as they did; that if we hope to be with them in the kingdom of glory, we must follow them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. If

then we revere the word of God, we cannot neglect a duty which was of such importance in the judgment of all his saints.

But if their practice proves the necessity of prayer, how much more the example of Christ? Before his brightness, prophets, apostles, and martyrs fade away, as stars in the firmament when the sun arises. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; nevertheless, prayer employed a considerable portion of his time. Fatigued as he was by excessive labours of love, in travelling from place to place, preaching in every town and village to immense multitudes, who thronged and pressed upon him, he needed all the rest the night could afford; yet would he sometimes *rise a great while before it was day*, that, retiring upon the mountain's top, he might pray without interruption. Sometimes the moon and stars saw him, their Maker, an earnest and devout intercessor, whilst others were sleeping in their beds.

After this record, can any one, calling himself a Christian, question the absolute need he has to pray? If the master of the house, infinitely distant from the slightest stain of sin, *prayed*, how much more must they of his household, weak and sinful as they are? If the Lord over all, when he appeared in our flesh, *prayed*, how much more must fallen creatures be bound to pray? Should any one imagine himself excused from this duty. the proper rebuke of such audacious impiety is to reply, the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs, all prayed; the Saviour in the days of his flesh prayed—Whom makest thou thyself?

Further, the absolute need we have to pray is evident, because it is the only means of obtaining mercy, and grace to do the will of God. He gives health and long life, houses and possession, to those who never bend their knee before him. Not so spi-

ritual and eternal blessings. He never pardons sin, or saves from its detestable dominion, till prayer is made for the invaluable favour. The unchangeable ordinance runs thus: If thou shalt pray unto God, he shall be favourable unto thee, Job xxxiii. "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy [what, to all sorts of men indiscriminately, to the profane and self-sufficient? No, but] unto all them that call upon thee," Psalm lxxxvi. 6. Omniscient as he is, and full of compassion, he requires and commands us to make our requests known to him, before he will supply our spiritual necessities. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not," Jer. xxxiii. 3. But no words can more emphatically prove that prayer is the grand necessary means of obtaining mercy, and finding grace to help, than those of our Redeemer. "Ask and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." This is as much as to affirm, that without asking, seeking, and knocking, we can receive no spiritual good from above. Consequently, not to pray is, most evidently, to remain destitute of the things which accompany salvation. Every one who despises this method, which God hath chosen as the fittest for conveying necessary supplies to the immortal soul, confiding in his own strength or virtues, in the finished work of Christ, or the election of grace, must unavoidably remain a slave to sin, and under the curse.

The profane will not stoop to seek help and power from on high; therefore, the appearances of goodness, which are their boast, can never amount to more than a partial regard for what is right; which, poor as it is, is sure to fall a sacrifice to the ruling passion. Thus you may often observe a man priding himself on his moral goodness, and pouring

contempt on devotional duties, miserably chagrined by every trifling disappointment, and for the slightest provocation full of resentment, if not breathing murderous revenge. You may often observe a despiser of prayer much caressed by others, and no less self-applauded for humanity, good nature, and contempt of money, studiously plotting the ruin of innocence, and adding cruelty to injustice, to gratify his body. And frequently you may see a warm advocate for the doctrines of grace, and the glory of Christ, deceitful, covetous, and a slave to sin, through habitual neglect of prayer.

In fact, the *connexion* of all graces is the work of the Holy Spirit, consequently no one can pay uniform obedience, who doth not place his dependence on that promised helper, only given to them who ask him.

Add to these arguments for the necessity of prayer the plain command of God. No man is left at liberty whether he will pray or no, nor can he neglect prayer, yet only suffer the loss of some advantages he might procure by it. Great guilt is contracted by neglecting to pray. It is a contempt of God and his authority, who has not more expressly required us to shew mercy than to worship himself. "Men ought always to pray, and to continue in prayer." To plead our good qualities and good behaviour, as setting aside our obligation to prayer, is actually to live in the commission of the basest theft, defrauding even God of his due. With equal reason, and as little affront to him, may we refuse to obey his law in doing justice to men, as refuse honour to himself, to whom honour in the highest degree belongs.

In this light you must regard the duty of prayer, to be preserved from the contagion of unreasonable and wicked men, who either totally neglect, or de-

plorably trifle and dissemble with God in it. So will you perceive odious injustice masked with the appearance of integrity : and high pretensions to honour, whilst, in fact, there is a violation of the most important duty, a duty resulting from our relation to God, as our Maker, and enjoined by him, the one Lawgiver, able to save and to destroy.

This injustice towards God, and contempt of him expressed by habitual neglect of prayer, is a sin which no excellencies the world applauds can in the least degree excuse. Wherever it is chargeable, like rebellion against the state, or adulterous commerce, it cancels every pretension to be spared on account of any good qualities. Kings of the earth never acquit a rebel, because high treason is his *only* crime ; much less does the Lord Almighty, whose name is jealous, overlook the contempt thrown upon himself, because the person guilty of it is free from all dishonesty towards men. To fancy he will overlook such an affront, is to entertain the most despicable idea of his character, as if he was ignorant of the treatment his name and word receive, or indifferent about the matter. But such a God no more resembles the God of the whole earth, the God of Christians, than Baal or Moloch. The true God is a jealous God, and terrible : jealous, not to allow his glory to be given to another, or denied to himself : terrible, to punish his adversaries, who rob him of the homage he demands, as the Lord of the universe, in whose hands is the breath of every living thing. He hath taught us, by every form of expression which can engage our attention, that to serve him with reverence and godly fear is the whole duty of man : consequently a despiser of prayer, though adorned with every quality the profane admire, still wants the one thing needful to sanctify his generosity, benevolence, and social vir-

tues. For, idolized as these are by the world, they weigh nothing in the balance of the sanctuary, unless flowing from love to God. Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, I am nothing. "For them who honour me," saith the Lord, "I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed," 1 Sam. ii. Nothing, therefore, shall excuse or palliate the insolence of attempting to supersede the necessity of devotion, by affecting to magnify moral honesty and benevolence as the sum of man's duty.

The profane, indeed, pretend to much nobler ideas of the Supreme Being than Christians who are governed by his own word. He, say they, knows all things; why then should yet tell him what you want? He is loving also to every man: therefore, without our request, will give us that which is good. What are our prayers to him? Pure and undefiled religion is, to do justice, and love mercy.

The confidence with which some make such assertions would tempt one to conclude they know the mind of God, when it is impossible they should in the least degree. For as skill in human sciences can only be gained by studying them, so the knowledge of God is only to be obtained by prayer and meditation on his own word: both which the profane despising, though they profess themselves wise, they betray the grossest ignorance in their objections against the necessity of prayer. Had this duty been enjoined, either as giving God information, or exciting in him a love for us, to which he was a stranger, till our petitions gave it birth, their objections would have been of force. But how exceedingly foolish are they, when all our encouragement to pray is a precious full assurance that God knows, better than we can ourselves, all our wants, and, because he loves us, will hear and answer.

The absolute necessity then of prayer remains indisputable on the grounds already mentioned, viz. the constant practice of the saints, and of the Saviour too, as the grand means of obtaining grace, to serve God acceptably, enjoined by his high command. To these one argument more may be added: *prayer* is necessary to *preserve* and increase in our minds a clear knowledge of our many wants, a sense of our absolute dependence upon God, and a lively gratitude for his mercies. Such a solemn constant representation of these great truths before our Maker is of admirable efficacy! The conclusion, therefore, is evident (let it be well weighed) that no engagements in business or practice of social duties will justify either neglect of prayer, or a cold customary performance of the duty. Our prayer must be diligent, persevering, importunate; no other prayer is heir to any promise honourable to God, or profitable to men. Whatever the world does, such prayer will every believer in Jesus present before the throne of grace.



## SUNDAY XLVIII.

### CHAP. XLVIII.

#### The Properties of acceptable Prayer.

**WE** have proved the true object, the nature, the subject matter, and the necessity of prayer; we are now to point out the properties which make it acceptable, and ensure its success.

The first is a real purpose, to believe and do as

God teaches and commands. For if, from pride of learning, or love of sin, we refuse to submit to his authority, flattering ourselves that multiplied devotions are sufficient, or obedience in all points, save where the beloved lust is spared—in this case, our prayers will be resented as an high provocation. For what can be baser than a profession of honoring God by our worship, when we manifest real contempt of him by wilful disobedience? What greater offence than to implore pardon, though determined not yet to give up sin? Or to pretend to call upon the Lord for liberty, as if we were enslaved against our will, when we love our bondage? If we regard iniquity in our hearts, though we make many prayers, he will hide his face from us: “For he heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth.”

Yet it must be observed in this place, with peculiar caution, that no one, though in actual subjection to sin, ought to be discouraged, on this account, from praying, *provided* he in earnest seeks deliverance, because from the throne of grace he must receive that blessing. In a guilty and enslaved condition, all the saints of God have begun first to call upon him: nor is any one disqualified from making acceptable prayer, though the combat with a master sin is for a time severe and dubious, and he may be frequently overcome by his own wickedness. If, in this sad case, the sinner feels shame and sorrow, with great desire (notwithstanding the dreadful power of his corruptions) to serve God, he ought immediately to make his confession, and bewail his miserable bondage.—Then will he know there is a deliverer, who looketh down from heaven to hear the groanings of such as are in captivity to their sins, and ready to perish. Nay, where relapses are frequent, though the condition be most deplorable,

yet let not prayer be given up; for this is turning our back on the only remedy which can be used. If there be a real contention against sin, and unfeigned prayer for victory over it, I would encourage such to maintain the combat. Their souls are at stake, and the promise of God is sure, he will yet hear their cry, and will help them.

A second property in all acceptable prayer is self-abasement. We must draw nigh to God, conscious of our vileness, which renders us unworthy so much as to lift up our eyes to Heaven, much more to receive pardon, peace, and salvation. We must make our requests as mere objects of mercy, who would have no cause to complain, were our sins punished with eternal death. Great stress is laid upon this humiliation of the soul by the inspired writers. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit," Psalm xxxiv. When Jehovah describes the glory of his Majesty in the sublimest manner, he specifies this indispensable requisite in the right worship of his name: "Thus saith the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." St. James strongly urges the same humiliation; he addresses those who were formal in their devotions, constant and punctual in prayer, but little affected with their defilement and sinfulness. After reproving them for asking amiss, that they might consume it upon their lusts, he directs them how to pray with success: "God," says he, "resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness; humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord; and he shall lift you up."

This abiding sense of our own vileness must attend our prayer, in opposition to those self-exalting ideas natural to us, and in full proof that we know no man living can be justified in the sight of God, should he enter into judgment with him.

To this humiliation must be joined affiance in God, and boldness in approaching him. When we ask, we must not fluctuate between hope and doubt; but be assured, we shall no less certainly obtain all we need, than if the blessings we implore were already given. When, for instance, we confess our sins with sorrow and humiliation, begging mercy through the atonement, we must be confident we shall not be disappointed; or when we pray for victory over our natural corruptions, we must assure ourselves they shall be subdued. When, in great distress and perplexity of mind, we beg of God direction, support and deliverance, we must not listen to a fear, that perhaps we shall not be heard: for by harbouring distrust, whether God will perform his gracious promises, we exceedingly dishonour him; and, in the very act of addressing him as almighty, good, gracious, and faithful, betray a suspicion of his veracity, power, or love towards them who call on his name. Jesus saith, "Have faith in God." Depend without reserve upon him, for the performance of every thing he hath promised: "For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou moved, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith." How great soever the difficulty may be which you meet with in the way of duty, and as much above your strength to remove as to root up a mountain by a word from your mouth, it shall be brought to pass provided you place an unshaken trust in the divine power and

promises. "If ye believe ye have the things ye ask for, ye shall receive them." Some would confine such commands and promises to the apostles. But St. James gives it as an unchangeable direction to the church. "If any one of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord," James i.

These passages prove affiance in God is a principal property of Christian prayer, and require us to apply to him with liberty and confidence as to a Father. Indeed amongst all who love us, we can find none so tender and affectionate as he is to those who call upon him. The delightful communion between him and the faithful is therefore strongly expressed in the following words; "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Our worship and absolute obedience to the eternal Majesty is softened into holy familiarity, and, through the abundant grace of redemption, converted into a child-like dependence upon his care and love for us. Rom. viii.

It is difficult, indeed, to conceive how such confidence in God, and assurance of receiving from him every thing we ask for the good of our souls, can consist with a deep abiding consciousness of our own vileness; or how we can conquer the doubts arising from a sight of our numberless defects, so as to ask without a faltering tongue.

To remove this difficulty, another grand property of prayer, without which it cannot succeed, must be

insisted on, viz. Dependence on the sacrifice, righteousness, and intercession of Christ, the Head and great High Priest of his church. By this we constantly acknowledge our own good qualities are so far from procuring of themselves regard from God, that we do not presume to offer him even the homage due unto his name, without having respect to the merit of the all-perfect Mediator between God and man. By this act, we confess, that the death of Jesus, for our transgressions, to satisfy and demonstrate the justice of God, and his appearing in heaven our advocate, and the propitiation for our sin, is our grand encouragement to draw nigh to God in full assurance of faith, notwithstanding the infinite purity of his nature, the dreadful examples of his indignation against sin, and the defilement daily coming upon us.

When Jesus is thus our peace and hope, there is no room for confusion or distrust though we be unworthy and vile. For he is ordained of God to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. He stands engaged by office and love to undertake the cause, and save the souls of all who come to God by him. And the command from heaven is express, that we should, in consideration of his character and office, "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Further, it is essential to acceptable prayer, that it be offered up in *the name of Christ*, if not immediately addressed to himself. We commit a capital offence when we overlook him. If any one dare to think thus with himself—The mercy of God is sufficient encouragement to me to pray; I esteem it a disparagement of his goodness to apply to him by a Mediator; I need no one to intercede for me, nor will I be beholden to any thing more than my own

good qualities, and fitness for pardon, to make my peace with God, and procure me the benefit of eternal happiness. Prayer offered up to God upon such principles by any man is as great a *wickedness* as if he blessed an idol. It is an audacious censure of the divine constitution in the method of saving sinners and rebels. It is, as far as lies in man's power, to pull down the Son of God from his throne, and thrust him out of that highest office of unspeakable benevolence and glory, which he discharges in heaven. It is to treat even the revelation of God with scorn, since the most conspicuous doctrine in the Bible is, that Jesus Christ is the one Mediator between God and man, and advocate with the Father, and a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood, that God might be just, and yet the justifier of all that believe in Jesus.

There is an absolute need, therefore, that in all our approaches to God, we honour the Son even as we honour the Father, by solemnly expressing our dependence upon his sacrifice, righteousness, and intercession as the only means of enjoying the love of God.

Though we ask, therefore, only things promised, as disciples of Christ, and in his name, meaning no more, by these terms, than that we believe Christ was a prophet sent of God, our petitions, instead of finding acceptance, will be a high crime, betraying our haughty spirit and stubborn unbelief. For nothing but pride, and a rejection of Christ the Saviour, can lead us flatly to contradict the scripture declarations: "There is no other name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved, but that of Jesus; no way of coming to the Father, but by him." To suppose we may come in our own name, if we practice moral righteousness, makes Christ of none effect. No wonder, therefore, such stress is laid, in

scripture, on prayer being offered up to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

From what has been advanced, it appears indisputable, that a real purpose to obey God, a humble sense of our vile polluted condition before him, a full assurance of being heard, and a perpetual dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ the one Mediator, must unite in all acceptable prayer.

In the prayer of all real Christians, they do unite at first faintly, and not so easily to be discerned; but as Christians grow in grace, these properties become more and more conspicuous, and they themselves more conscious and assured, that in this manner they worship the God of their salvation.

But this spirit of true devotion is not confined to the closet or family. It leads Christians to delight in the great congregation, and be present in all ordinances by which God is honoured, his faithful people comforted and strengthened, and particularly, as opportunity offers, it is the desire of every one who glories in the cross of Christ, to eat and drink at his table, that they may there enjoy the communion of saints, and the most lively representation of Christ's body given for them, and of the blood of the New Testament shed for the remission of sins.

## SUNDAY XLIX.

## CHAP. XLIX.

## On the certain Success of Prayer.

**BELIEVERS** in Christ are encouraged diligently to pray, from absolute assurances that they shall succeed. This success is ascertained by considering from whence true prayer in the heart arises. We are taught in scripture, that of ourselves we cannot think a good thought, much less feel a desire and purpose to obey the Lord God in all things. If then we do come to him, as a child in want to his father, trusting in our Lord Jesus Christ, it is from a divine influence called in scripture, the drawing of the Father. Can such a gift be vouchsafed in vain? Can we think any one is enlightened to beg grace, that he may know and live in obedience to the will of God, yet not be heard? Can a poor petitioner fall down low on his knees before God for this excellent gift, yet rise up confounded at the rejection of his suit? No, by no means. The merciful, gracious God is not wont thus to afflict the contrite spirit, and disappoint the holy expectations excited in the heart by his own agency. On the contrary, a real desire of receiving any spiritual blessing is a pledge of its being given: "For every good and every perfect gift cometh from above, from the Father of lights, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, who of his own will begot us by the word of his truth," James i.

This is established by many affecting declarations. God represents himself as taking delight in the

prayer of the upright. In one place, assurance of success in prayer is described by his looking into the recesses of the heart, waiting to see the first dawning of prayer, and to answer it before clothed in the form of a direct petition. "And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear;" Isa. lxxvi. In another, he commands one of his children to publish the immediate acceptance of his own prayer: "I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and so thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin;" Ps. xxxii.

These passages assure us, we can never pray for a spiritual blessing, without receiving it. And that we might harbour no suspicion of the success of prayer, our Lord compares the readiness with which God succours the poor and needy who call upon him, to that which tender parents feel for their offspring in their wants—"What man is there of you, who if a son ask bread will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil [vitiating in your nature, are still by instinct drawn gladly to supply the necessities of your children], how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?"

Should it be objected, that the faults of the best are so many, as may well excite their doubts, whether God, consistently with the honour of his perfections, can hear them, this perplexity is removed by the assurance that Jesus Christ, the righteous, appears in heaven an advocate in behalf of all who call on him, alleging what satisfies the law, and absolves the humbled delinquent. The memorial of his abundant kindness in dying on the cross, is perpetually before God, whilst the Mediator declares it his rightful request, that for his sake the prayers of those who believe in him should be accepted, their

sins blotted out, and increase of grace bestowed upon them, for he ever liveth to make intercession.

This truth is represented with the greatest magnificence in the book of Revelation. The beloved disciple, we read, saw in vision all the choir of angels: "and there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour." But wherefore do the praises, for ever due, cease to ascend before the throne? It was that their whole attention might fix on the great angel, who, as the High Priest on the day of atonement, carried incense in a golden censer, and burnt it in the holy of holies before the Lord; so now he, the great High Priest of our profession, stands in a ministering posture before the altar of burnt-offerings, signifying the atonement he had made by his own blood. "And there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." As the perfuming smoke of incense, composed of finest spices, ascended up like a cloud to heaven, with the prayers of the congregation of Israel, offered at the same time; in this manner a representation was made of Christ's sacrifice and oblation, the virtue of which mingled like precious incense with the prayers of the Christian church, to make them a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God; Rev. viii.

And to add greater force to this magnificent representation of the Saviour's intercession, which gives infallible success to the prayer of faith, it is introduced immediately before the phials of wrath are poured out upon the apostate churches of Christ. Thus in the most affecting manner we are assured, that when the Almighty "whets his glittering sword, and cries, Aha! I will rid myself of my adversaries!"

no supplicant approaching him by Jesus Christ shall have cause to say his prayers were not heard. How dishonourable then, and injurious to the love of the Father, the mediation of the Son, and the gracious influence of the Spirit, is one doubt about the success of prayer !

Its certain success is evident from the promise of God "to fulfil the desire of them who fear him, to hear their cry, and help them. Every one that asketh, receiveth ; and every one that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened, Mat. vii. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it," John xiv.

To carry this assurance to the highest degree, I add, in the last place, the testimony of *facts*. If all who have prayed in the manner God has marked out, for the blessings he has promised, have without fail received them, there cannot be a more clear demonstration of any truth, than of the infallible success of prayer.

The word of God abounds with proof that he takes pleasure in making his power tributary, as it were, to the prayer of his faithful people. By prayer Joshua stopped the sun in his course, that he might execute the will of God on his enemies. By prayer Elijah, a man of like passions with ourselves, opened and shut the heavens. By prayer the three children were preserved from harm in the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lion's den. The time would fail to mention all the instances recorded in scripture of the wonders wrought by the hand of the Lord, in answer to prayer.

But if in extraordinary cases God, for the vindication of his truth, and manifestation of his glory thus answered the prayer of faith, how certain must

be its efficacy, when by it we seek only pardon, deliverance from sin, and those graces by which we may glorify our Maker? There is indeed no age without a cloud of witnesses to the infallible success of prayer. Ask those distinguished Christians in our own time, who bear the brightest resemblance to their Saviour, how they obtained such admirable mastery over their passions, such good-will and kindness towards all men; such readiness of obedience to God, through unfeigned love of his name, and delight in his service; ask them, and they will declare with one voice, Not by any power, wisdom, or resolution of our own; not through any original better formation, or advantage of education, but through the grace of God, earnestly sought in prayer, we are what we are. We began in earnest, we persevered with importunity in calling upon the name of the Lord; he heard, and we are not disappointed of our hope.\*

On the contrary, there is not within the pale of the Christian church a single slave to the love of women, wine, or money; not one led captive by a sour, angry, peevish, or turbulent spirit, but knows that either he despises prayer, or trifles with it; either disbelieves the necessity or the success of this application to God: or never once heartily engages in

\* Many illustrious proofs confirm the prevalence of prayer with God, and are to be found in the lives of the most excellent. But I never met with a more pleasing and honourable one than that recorded in the life of the celebrated physician, *Boerhaave*. A friend of his who had often admired his patience under the greatest provocation asked him by what means he had so entirely suppressed that impetuous passion, *anger*? The Doctor answered, with the utmost frankness and sincerity, that naturally he was quick of resentment, but by *daily prayer* he attained that mastery over himself. *Burton's Life of Boerhaave*.

It was his custom, never violated, to spend the first hour of every day in prayer, though patients from every country in Europe applied to him for advice.

it. Hence he cannot possibly experience victory over his detestable tempers, but must live and die in his fetters, and in his infamy.

Be glad then, O ye righteous, and rejoice all ye that are true hearted; sing, and give thanks unto the God of all grace, ye who love your fellow-creatures, whilst ye behold the abundant provision God has made to succour the poor and needy sons of Adam; even an infallible relief in prayer, under all difficulties, sorrows, and temptations.

Hence every real Christian must exceedingly value prayer, and diligently persevere in it, till the same bountiful God, whose ears are ever open to the prayers of his faithful people, in the end open heaven to their persons: till he give them admission into that glorious world, where petitions cease for ever; because neither weakness, nor want, nor fear, nor trials remain, but all the soul feels is perfect felicity, love, and praise.

With prayer, Christians must constantly join another principal part of devotion, the study of God's word. All scripture, the Old no less than the New Testament, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Therefore we are commanded to search into, and meditate upon it night and day. "These words, which I command thee, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt bind them as a sign upon thy hand; and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates," Deut. vi. *i. e.* thou shalt be continually conversant in them, and carefully treasure them up in your mind. St. Paul, speaking of the Old, not the New Testament, teaches us, that "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, and our admonition." Of the New Testament we are infallibly

assured it was written, that "we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, we might have life through him" John xx. St Peter instructs us, that he wrote both his epistles, to stir up the pure minds of Christians by "way of remembrance, and to put them in mind of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour."

The end, then, for which the scriptures were inspired of God, and are put into our hands, is, that we may with great care and diligence peruse them. Unless we do so, we profanely despise both his authority and great goodness. We act as if we either thought he was beneath our notice, or we so little needed his counsels, that it is not worth our while to read what his prophets, apostles, and own Son have published: not worth our while, though the contents of God's word are of everlasting moment: for it proposes articles of faith under the most awful sanctions; eternal life, if we receive them; death eternal, if we reject them. It prescribes a rule of duty essential to our peace, comfort, and safety. It holds forth promises exceeding great, to excite our diligence, and encourage our hope, and threatenings of such misery as infinitely exceeds all evil in this world, that at all times we may hear and fear, and never commit iniquity. He, therefore, who *neglects* to study and search the scripture, betrays his unbelief and scorn of his Maker; and proves that, like a brute, he only desires what can do his body good.

Indeed, the will of God is so plainly revealed in this matter, that no one but an infidel will justify a total neglect of the Bible. But then, amongst a multitude who read the Bible, allowance no doubt must be made for different capacities, and different situations in life; because these things make a great dif-

ference respecting the time which can be spared for so excellent an employment, and the knowledge of scripture. Yet, the principal thing men of all stations are to avoid, is a formal careless way of reading. This has been, in all ages, a general fault, and a great one indeed; for we may read the scripture in this way every day of our lives, and be in no degree wiser or better. To derive spiritual benefit from the Bible, the following rules must necessarily be observed.

We must lift up our hearts to God, whose book it is, to explain to us what we are about to read. This is required, because the doctrines, which are the glory of the Bible, sorely offend our natural pride; and its pure precepts are intolerable to our sensuality and blind self-love. A heavenly ray, therefore, must come down from the fountain of light to reveal the excellency of the doctrines, and our want of the relief and salvation they bring; and the mercy and love there is in every commandment, that we may cheerfully obey. In these points, scripture is every clear. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." And when St. Paul speaks of the faithful, who knew the things which were freely given of God to them, he says, they received the Spirit which is of God, *that they might know them*. And, in old time, so deeply sensible were holy men of their inability to reap advantage from the word of God without his teaching, that with the word before them they continually make request that they might understand it. "I am a stranger upon earth. O hide not thy commandments from me. I am thy servant, O give me understanding, that I may know thy statutes. Open thou my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

These blessed servants of God we must imitate,

and, when we read his word, seek the true meaning and interpretation of it from his Spirit, promised to all who ask it. Not indeed expecting a *new* light as that signifies any *new doctrine*, distinct from scripture, or *supplemental to it*: either of these is wild enthusiasm, both pitiable and dangerous. But most rational and wise it is to expect and pray for the Spirit, whilst we diligently study the written word; because this is not given us to lessen, but increase our dependence upon God. But if the gift of the word was sufficient, provided we made due use of our rational faculties, there would be no room for exercising dependence upon God, as the continual fountain of light. We might trust to our own understanding solely. Besides, in full proof of the insufficiency of the written word to do us good, if we are not enlightened by the Holy Spirit, he is promised to abide with the church of Christ for ever, as the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the things of God; nor shall we ever feel their excellency, authority, and power, without this *internal* revelation.

There is, I readily grant, a knowledge of scripture truths, which men of parts and penetration attain at once, upon turning their attention to them; so that they can talk and preach about them without detection amongst the multitude, whilst they are workers of iniquity, blind and dead in their sins. How worthless this knowledge! What a scandal to Christianity! Better never to have known the way of the holy commandment, than to hold the truth in unrighteousness. Yet thus unprofitable must all knowledge of divine things be, till the grace of God gives them power to sway the soul. Because, by whatever way we come to the knowledge of any truth, contrary to the bent of our wicked hearts, we need much more than the strongest external evidence

to give it operation effectual for practice. In proof of this, consider the case of the people at Mount Horeb. Could there be a doubt that the lawgiver was able to save or destroy? Yet they dare him to avenge their idolatry, into which they rush, not only against the express command of Jehovah, but when the trumpet had scarcely ceased to sound in their ears. Their mad detestable conduct is imputed to their infidelity. "How long will this people provoke me? How long will it be ere they believe me?" The same is our own case. We transgress the commandments; we prefer some vile pleasure or gain to our known duty. Whilst we allow the scripture is of God, and read it as such, till we read it with prayer, imploring God to make his own word answer the excellent ends for which it was given, we read in vain.

If there be any to whom this doctrine appears weak and ungrateful, they must follow their own infidel delusions. In the mean time, the doctrine itself is of the utmost importance; for, once take away the influence of the Holy Spirit from the members of the church, and the gospel of Christ will for ever be no more than a sublime speculation, as ineffectual to reform the world as Pagan philosophy. The Comforter, the Spirit of truth, is the inestimable privilege of Christ's church; therefore, before we read the Bible, we must implore his light and teaching.

A second rule we must always observe, is to read but a *small* portion at one time, except it be in the historical parts of the Bible. It is too common for persons who have the character of being very devout, to set themselves a quantity to read every day, two or three chapters, which they do in haste, with little or no meditation—consequently receive hurt instead of benefit, and provoke God, (whilst they fancy they are doing their duty), by shewing

such contempt to the great things of his law, as if they might read them with no more attention than a song deserves.\*

We must by no means content ourselves with having the words of God before your eyes, but must ponder on their weighty sense, and labour to fix their import deep, till the spirit of the Bible is transfused into our minds.

By this way, I allow, we shall make but a slow progress in going through the principal parts of this inestimable volume, compared with those who can read several chapters in one day. But we shall receive ample reward for our pains, because when we use much recollection and meditation, upon taking God's word into our hands, and solemnly place ourselves, as it were, at the feet of Jesus for instruction, we shall find the meaning of it beautifully unfolding, and the knowledge which we gain in this manner will always be attended with a transforming efficacy. It will also remain with us, and be our own for use at all times, whilst our hasty readings leave no trace behind them, and even the explanations of commentators, however they may seem to instruct, are forgotten very soon, in comparison with what has root

\* This shocking way of reading the Bible often renders it contemptible in the judgement of young people, and no wonder. Some superstitious female devotees, all alive to the pomps and vanities of the world, yet will have their daughters read to them the psalms and lessons for the day. Accordingly, without a single pause, or one desire to know the meaning of the words, they are hurried over, while eager expectation of amusement immediately to succeed, and the pride of dress, renders even this despicable offering an irksome task indeed.

I would therefore entreat parents, if they mean to honour God, or do any good to their children, to guard against such irreverent treatment of the book they believe is from Heaven, or not to read it at all, which of two evils will certainly be the least.

in ourselves, from a devout perusal. Notwithstanding, therefore, sloth and natural aversion to study spiritual subjects will strongly oppose this excellent method of reading God's word, we must do violence to ourselves. A little perseverance will soon master all the difficulty, and we shall find cause to say, "The law of the Lord is more precious to me than thousands of gold and silver. In that law do I exercise myself day and night."

Nearly allied to meditation on the word of God is examination of ourselves by it, so as to excite correspondent impressions on our minds, and, when we find them not, to confess the poverty and misery of our condition. For instance, when the character of God is before us, in those passages which describe his infinite power and glorious holiness, which the host of Heaven adores; yet more tender and affectionate to men who fear him, than any father to a son that serveth him; to read this character will never affect us, all admirable as it is, unless we pause and ask ourselves, Do we behold such glory, and such excellency in the Lord God Almighty? Have we such a sense of his goodness, as makes him our exceeding joy? Do we cheerfully trust in him for all we want, and to defend us against all our enemies? When we read the scripture representations of the glory, office, work and temper of the Redeemer, and the great promises made to all who believe on his name, little will this profit, unless we at the same time search and try ourselves, whether such a Saviour appears to us altogether lovely and absolutely needful; the chief mercy of God, and the grandest display of all his infinite perfections? Whether we commit unto him our immortal souls, without suspicion or fear of falling under his protection, and with an undivided heart serve him, as our sovereign Lord?

When we read also the strong assertions in the book of God, of our natural weakness, blindness, love of sin, and total depravity, in vain we shall assent to them, because found there, unless we trace each of these as they have broke out in our lives, and in some symptoms of them which are often still felt within.

When the scripture before us describes the self-denying tempers of the faithful in Christ, their deliverance from the dominion of worldly hopes and fears, their unfeigned love to God and man, and their abhorrence of all evil; in vain we read of these excellent dispositions, unless we prove and examine in what degree such an excellent change has taken place in our hearts.

Unless we read all scripture with this *self-application*, we shall do just enough to flatter and deceive ourselves, as if we were something, when we are nothing; enough to make us fancy we pay regard to the word of God, when in fact it has no weight to form our judgment, govern our tempers, or determine us in the grand object of our pursuit.

We must not then satisfy ourselves with *reading* scripture, but read it like men who are certain this infallible word shall absolutely decide our condition; like men who know, he only is blessed whom that word blesses, and he cursed whom that curses. It is both our duty and interest so devoutly to peruse scripture, that its spirit may be impressed on all our sentiments, breathe in all our desires, and live in our whole conduct; convincing all around us, that the word of the Lord is pure, converting the soul.

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## PRAYER,

Suited to the Subject of the preceding Chapters.

MERCIFUL and gracious God, always nigh to them that fear thee, and the deliverer of all who cry

to thee ; give us to know our great guilt and weakness, our blindness and depravity, that we may hunger and thirst after righteousness, pray always, and not faint. May we pray in faith, assured that thy ear hearkens to the most stammering tongue, and to the sighs of all who bewail their captivity to sin. May we be enabled to watch the various workings of our evil nature, to know our peculiar duties and temptations ; to remember our daily mercies, and by these be led to make suitable confessions, supplications, and thanksgivings before thee. Impress upon our hearts, O Lord, the example of all thy saints now in glory, and of thy dear Son, our only Saviour, when in the form of a servant. By their diligence and great earnestness in prayer, may we be stirred up to shake off all sloth and lukewarmness, to tremble at the thought of restraining prayer before thee, or neglecting to call upon thy name. Teach us effectually that the prayer of faith is the only appointed means of obtaining blessings for the soul, and power to have a conscience void of offence towards God or man. And in all our addresses to thee, may we be upright, and with deep humility abase ourselves in thy presence. Deliver us, O God, from provoking thy wrath, by daring to approach thee without a propitiation for sin, and the advocate for transgressors. To Jesus, who endured the cross, and ever liveth to make intercession, may we always look, and to him bring every offering, for whose sake alone, and at whose hands, it becomes thee, O Father, to receive our worship. In all our requests may we have access to thee with confidence, through Jesus Christ the Lord, by the influence of the Holy Ghost.

O God, fill us with faith in the precious promises thou hast made to all who call upon thee ; faith in the name and power of Christ, engaged in behalf of

all who come to thee by him, that we may esteem prayer our highest privilege, and be more and more fervent and diligent in that duty, till all our prayers are completely answered in our everlasting salvation.

Grant these our requests for Christ's sake, our great and merciful High-priest, our only Mediator and Redeemer. *Amen.*

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## SUNDAY L.

### CHAP. L.

The Pleasures peculiar to Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**I**T is too general an opinion, that men can never be at present so happy, if they entirely submit to the government of God, as by taking some forbidden self-indulgence; that if we are to be wholly at the will of our Redeemer, all thoughts of pleasure must be given up, and we pass our time like superstitious recluses, in moping melancholy, or at least under very irksome restraints.

This falsehood is full of impiety, and hurtful to a great degree. Full of impiety, for it blasphemes the life of faith and the service of God, as not to be endured, but in view of some future reward, or through fear of the wrath to come; though, in point of superior enjoyment, the life of faith and the service of God, have the promise of this world, as well as of heaven. The slander is also hurtful to the last degree, because, if men imagine Christian obedience uncomfortable, violent love of pleasure, joined with

a faint belief of eternity, will certainly lead them to take part in the voluptuousness at hand, risking any loss they may sustain beyond the grave.

The system, therefore, of doctrinal and practical Christianity, contained in this volume, cannot more properly conclude than with a faithful account of the high pleasures peculiar to real Christians; and with unanswerable proofs that these pleasures are rational, certain to be enjoyed, and necessary to produce and secure Christian obedience.

From hence it will appear clear to demonstration, that the obedient children of God, so often pitied as miserable in their self denial, and on account of the strictness of their life which separates them from the licentious world, do in fact know more pleasure than any people upon earth.

The first source of pleasure peculiar to them is their excellent knowledge. God the Father, in his adorable perfections, in his works and word, in the redemption he hath provided, and the various blessings he hath promised: God the Son, in his original glory and marvellous humiliation, in all the parts and benevolent purposes of his mediation: God the Holy Ghost, in his miraculous gifts of old, his perpetual influences and consolations, with all the realities of the eternal world, are pleasing subjects of meditation to a true believer.

The whole herd of nominal Christians, it is true, may hear the sound of these great things, and perhaps profess some belief of their reality. But wedded to objects of sense, they can find no heart to take an exact survey of them; wherefore, seeing they see, and do not perceive, and hearing they hear, and do not understand. On the contrary, believers attain a real knowledge of the excellency of scripture truths, which is lively, penetrating the soul, and of course delightful. For who can question the plea-

tures of science, when thousands toil for no other reward? The discovery of truth charms, though it be in objects of sense, which have relation only to time, without any power to give the dispositions essential to peace of mind. Is such knowledge pleasant? How much more a discovery of truths which, beside their novelty, have a grandeur even to fill the soul with admiration; a grandeur no sooner apprehended, than they necessarily excite the most pleasing ideas!—Before, they were either despised or suspected, or blindly credited from force of education. Now, they act like themselves; they inspire new resolutions; they kindle ardent desires; they excite abundant hope. Believers are brought by their spiritual knowledge into a new and glorious world, where objects interesting beyond measure, all tending to their honour and exaltation, surround them: and in proof of the pleasure they receive from this knowledge, the change from night to day is chosen by the Holy Ghost to express their joy, on being translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the the Lord, Ephes. v. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv.

Besides, the pleasure believers enjoy from their *first acquaintance* with scripture truths, *increases* as they advance. There is a very sensible progress in divine, no less than human science. At first a faint and confused view of the gospel, afterwards a clear perception of its various uses and matchless excellence is obtained. At first they receive the truth with hesitation, afterwards they come to a full assurance of understanding and hope, and comprehend the breadth and length, and height and depth, of what before was superficially known. Such progress is inseparable

from perseverance in the faith of Christ, never failing to prove a spring of fresh pleasures.

This knowledge is in a peculiar degree pleasant, from the *solid benefit* it confers. All other objects which can engage the mind leave men, after the highest degrees of success in their pursuit, to feel wants unsatisfied, passions unsubdued, and various evils to which they are exposed. Their knowledge cannot support, much less profit them, when they are leaving the present scene. They must die even as others in the dark, not knowing what their future existence is to be. This is the necessary condition even of those who excel most in human science. But real Christians receive, from their knowledge of Christ, contentment in every condition, victory over inordinate affections, a shield against all assaults, and a supernatural firmness of mind to bear up in the hour of distress, and look out for eternal glory to begin, soon as this mortal life is ended.

Knowledge thus supremely excellent enriches, in different degrees, all real believers in Christ Jesus. The poorest and lowest of the people (let not the great and learned take offence) are not one single degree farther removed from these incomparable benefits, than men of parts and education. It is God only who teaches this knowledge, and every human praying soul that seeks, is equally sure to find it. The pure delight flowing from this divine knowledge is at once emphatically affirmed, and powerfully recommended. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and *happy* is every one that retaineth her.

Who can consider the nature of scripture truth,

or believe these divine assertions, and not allow that believers in Christ Jesus have more pleasure than any people upon earth?

But knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God is always joined with his peace, with the privilege and spirit of adoption.

No sooner do men truly depend, through knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, upon his sacrifice and mediation, than they have the promise and oath of God, that there is no condemnation to them. The prophets, the apostles, and the Redeemer, continually affirm this. In proportion as they believe the truth, their conscience is rationally appeased, and from a sharp accuser becomes an encouraging friend. It now no longer upbraids them with their folly, but commends their wisdom in fleeing to the refuge which God hath provided; no longer haunts them with fears of approaching judgment, but registers and attests their cordial reception of the atonement. They have now the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In this one fact they see the indictment which was against them, which was contrary to them, taken out of the way, and they have boldness to enter into the holiest through the blood of Jesus.

The superior joy which such persons feel in their gracious acceptance with God, no one can question, who knows what different ideas true Christians conceive from the rest of mankind, both of his holiness and the desert of their own offences. The only reason why pardon of sin is not universally coveted more than beauty, wealth, or honour, is, because men are generally full of presumption and infidelity. But suppose your guilt was now placed before you in its true point of light, so that, wherever you went or whatever you were doing, this poignant awful thought forced itself upon your mind, "I have

been an enemy to God, for I have in my practice denied his government, and I have robbed him of his glory. I have abused his goodness, wearied his patience, and provoked his justice to shut me out of heaven and his favour; what must I do to be saved?"

Suppose, in this distress, your understanding was enlightened, and your soul brought to rely upon God, manifest in the flesh, on purpose to seek and save those who were lost by sin, as you now with grief perceive yourself; can you conceive a joy equal to a change from such fears to a good hope? Can you imagine a more pleasing alteration of circumstances, than to have grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, succeed the black clouds that were every moment threatening to burst over your head? Though the blessing be purely spiritual, and therefore set at nought by the multitude, who never knew pain for their sins; yet to you it must prove a spring of joy, as much beyond temporal blessings as the salvation of the soul is more desirable to all who know its worth, than any fading good below, however useful in its place.

A second blessing, joined always with the knowledge of Christ, is the privilege of adoption into the family of God. To give some just idea of the pleasure derived from thence, we must explain the nature of adoption, as it anciently obtained. It was customary, especially in the states of Greece and Rome, for a man of wealth, in default of issue from his own body, to make choice of some person, upon whom he put his own name, proclaiming him his heir, and requiring him to relinquish his own relations, and never return to his own family. In this act there was an imitation of nature, by which the afflictive failure of offspring from themselves was supplied by something as much like a child of their own as pos-

sible. The person thus adopted was by law entitled to the inheritance upon the decease of his adopter; and, however void of the least title to such a benefit before, was now invested with the same privilege, as if he had been born the son of his benefactor.

Suppose this act of adoption taking place in favour of some desolate orphan, how conspicuous would be his exaltation! How exceedingly pleasing the change of his condition! In the judgment of the world, how happy the object of such a prosperous providence!

But worse is our natural state than that of a destitute orphan. The Redeemer affirms, that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, till our relation to him by living faith at once enriches us with all spiritual blessings. If this be a hard saying, and enrages the world, all believers in Christ acknowledge such was their own case, and see their own picture in it. In this deplorable condition, they heard, understood, and believed the record God has given—that he sent his own Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons, be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: “For to as many as received him, to them gave he power, or privilege, to become the Sons of God.”

Have not persons, who receive so great a gift, pleasure above all men in the world? Have they not cause to cry out, in joyful admiration, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!” What an height of honour, to be adopted into a relation with himself, which makes them rich to all eternity! “For all things, saith the Lord, [speaking by his apostle to true believers,] are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; all means, ordinances, and

ministers, for your spiritual good ; or the world, all things in it, as far as they can be of any real service ; or life, as long as its continuance can be a favour, and, when it ceases, death shall be gain—things present, and things to come, all temporal and eternal mercies are yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

What an inheritance is this ! Who can know it is his own by the free gift of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, and not *rejoice* ?

This joy is inspired and supported by the *spirit of adoption*, connected both in the new covenant and in the hearts of believers with the privilege of adoption. We are fallen to a great distance from God, which is increased by our wilful offences against him, of which our consciences accuse us. But unprovoked aggressors can hardly ever believe the party they have greatly injured does fully forgive them. So, after our most unreasonable and multiplied transgressions, we are naturally in pain about the intentions of our Maker concerning us. This distrust aggravates our misery, and prevents our receiving consolation from above, when most we need it. Hence, men under their distress, instead of fleeing to God in affiance and love as a tender Father, approach him, compelled by their necessity, with a faltering tongue and trembling heart. Such is the gloomy condition of the multitude respecting God, as daily observation proves. Did they trust in him as their father and friend, they would not, as they do, sink and be dismayed under their distresses, or be unwilling to think of him, and call on his name. The case is happily the reverse with real believers. The Holy Ghost describes the state of their minds in these words : "Ye have not received again the spirit of bondage to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father ;

the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." They look up to him with the sweet assurance children have in their affectionate parents—Not intimidated by infinite Majesty or consciousness of guilt, as if it should be avenged upon them; not in darkness about the intentions of God towards them, but assured by his own promise, ratified to them by his Spirit, that he is their God, and they his people: or, if suspicions of his love towards them begin to rise, they still exercise the spirit of adoption; for with holy shame they lament their unbelief, they make known to him all their wants, and wait in humility till he sees fit to help and comfort them.

Ransack now all the boasted sources of gratification in the world. I defy you to produce a pleasure arising from them which can stand in competition with an heart free from every other care than that of serving him in our station, knowing he is our great and all-sufficient friend. The calm of mind, the sunshine, the entire complacency in God which the spirit of adoption creates, is called the kingdom of God within; not by erring men, who use high flights in their expressions, but by the Saviour himself—And the more believers grow in grace, and in the love and knowledge of Christ, the more they are sure to enjoy of the spirit of adoption in all its fruits.

Another peculiar source of pleasure, inseparable from those already named, is the union of excellent tempers formed in true Christians by the Holy Ghost. In their repentance (discouraging as repentance sounds) pleasure mingles even with their tears. They love to abase themselves before God, giving due honour to his justice, holiness, and majesty. They have a pleasure in loathing themselves for their past ill conduct towards him, who stands not over them with a rod of iron to punish their trans-

gressions, but holds forth the sceptre of his grace, that they may approach him, and live for ever. They feel pleasure when they return to God, and say, We come to thee, thou art the Lord whom we will serve. What by the basest sacrilege we so long alienated from thy service, we now restore. Take all the powers of our soul and body : possess and employ them only in thy work, and to thy glory. When believers disclaim their own base interests, without intending to keep any thing from God, without making conditions, or halting between two opinions, as if inclined to retract the surrender of themselves, there is always much pleasure interwoven in the very exercises of repentance ; but much more in acts of faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. These are lively acknowledgments of the highest obligations, the noblest motives to love and obey, and the surest foundation for joy and triumph. What can you imagine more delightful, than for men, who see themselves sinful and miserable, to hear the voice of the Son of God, who says he will deliver the poor and needy when they cry unto him, and them who have no helper ? They feel their own emptiness, and know all fulness dwells in him for their relief. They bow at his footstool, ready to perish, and he receives them as the father the returning prodigal, to put upon them the best robe. They confess their desert of wrath, and he most graciously grants them an ample pardon. They know, without his interposition, they must have been condemned to hell, and, behold, he has exalted them by his own life, and his death on the cross, into children of God, and heirs of glory. What, like these views, can excite pleasing sensations in the mind ?

These, reader, are permanent sources of pleasure peculiar to real believers in Christ. From hence, they stand quite independent of the world for their

highest satisfaction, and enjoy much comfort in spite of all disappointments from it.

Besides, there are seasons in which it pleases God to fill them with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. This he generally does, as appears from experience, before they are called to severe trials, or when they are preparing for more extensive usefulness. Then, in a remarkable degree, God is their exceeding joy. There are also frequently seasons of devotion, both public and secret.

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When their souls,  
Snatch'd by the Spirit's power from their cells  
Of fleshly thralldom, feel themselves upborne  
On plumes of ecstasy, and boldly spring  
Up to the porch of heaven.

Consider these several sources of pleasure peculiar to true believers, and see their amount.

They alone possess that excellent knowledge which brings with it the peace of God, and the blessings of redemption. They alone are children of God by adoption and grace, and have the heart of children towards him. They alone are conscious of faith, repentance, love, hope, and every grace, in which the divine image consists. They alone experience communion with God; and sometimes feel transport, which they remember, with lively thankfulness, long after the particular sensation is worn off from which it arose.

“Let not the wise man then glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; for neither learning, knowledge, power, or wealth, afford the best pleasures we can enjoy: but let him that glorieth, glory in this,” that he understandeth or *knoweth* God, who, though heaven is his throne, doth indeed dwell with the faithful on earth, and in their behalf exerciseth, “loving-kindness, judgment, and righteous-

ness, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Jer. xi.

Judge not then, with the eye of flesh, what is the best source of present pleasure: for it is no more perceptible by sense, than the excellencies of the mind, than learning and genius. And, as you would justly meet with universal contempt for your ignorance, should you dare to say, the study of the fine arts, or discoveries in nature, can give no pleasure, because beyond the comprehension of the multitude, and neither showy nor palpable like the joys of the sensual; so be assured, you blaspheme the honour of God, deny his truth, and bewray your own dark state to all the excellent of the earth, when you dare question the present pleasures enjoyed by every one who believes in Christ to the saving of his soul.

Pray, therefore, that you may be taught of God, and darkness be made light before you. Then will your gross mistakes, arising from a depraved heart, be rectified. Then will you clearly see, that real Christians are not more distinguished by purity of life, than their superior pleasures. Then will you understand, that (contrary to the despicable opinion the world holds to their sober singularity, and the impious prejudices which every where prevail against it) the eye never saw any thing so grand and beautiful amongst the objects of sense; nor did the ear ever hear any thing so delightful or advantageous; nor, amongst all the sciences, did the mind ever comprehend any thing so adapted to give, with excellence, joy to the soul, as the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, even before the sons of men: which things are given to them on this side the grave, as an earnest of what they shall possess for ever in glory.

If this great assertion be still suspected, and full proof demanded that such joy is rational, certain, and

necessary, it shall be produced in the following chapter.

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## SUNDAY LI.

### CHAP. LI.

On the Pleasures peculiar to a Christian.

**T**HERE is nothing at first view, perhaps, more strange than the strong prejudices in men professing Christianity, against the joy it was revealed to inspire. That the doctrine of salvation by Christ crucified only should offend, is no wonder; for our high spirit knows not how to brook the self-abasement it demands; nor, any better, his pure precepts, from the universal self-denial they enjoin. But that men, calling themselves Christians, should quarrel even with the joy their own religion promises, and pour disgrace upon it as at variance with reason, is a surprising fact; since, upon the bare report of such pleasure and joy, one would conclude our natural desire of happiness must strongly prompt us to wish it were a reality; whilst many cutting disappointments from the world must incline us to think it *reasonable* some friendly sanctuary should be provided for all who love the Lord, where solid joys might certainly be found.

But, upon examination, we shall fully detect the ground of this strange prejudice against the joys springing from the faith of Christ. For were they allowed to be *real*, men must pass for counterfeits,

who are strangers to them by their own confession. They must be forced to see how despicable is their religion, which consists in assenting to scripture-truths, without feeling their power; in a round of duties, without spiritual life, or in being honest, sober, and harmless, without any more delight in God than infidels know. So that the whole character, peace, and security of nominal Christians, in their own judgment, are at stake. Wherefore they are bribed in regard to their own quiet, to cry down, as rank enthusiasm, those joys to which themselves are strangers. Besides, the spirit which lusteth in us to envy cannot endure others should receive tokens of love from God, which we ourselves know not.

To these causes, enforced by a few instances perhaps of real delusion, we may fairly ascribe that general and stubborn prejudice against one of the noblest privileges of a Christian, joy in God.

In vindication, therefore, of this privilege, I shall prove it is *reasonable* to conclude, that real Christians *may* experience, from the sources already named, much delight: *certain* it is they do and *necessary* they should.

It is most *reasonable* to conclude, that real Christians may experience much delight, because God represents himself under the character of a Father to the faithful in Christ Jesus, in a sense which none besides themselves can lay claim to. It would be endless to cite all the passages which assert this important distinction. The Redeemer, in the strongest terms distinguishes all believers from the rest of mankind: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father [by believing in and obeying me], the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." When he was going to heaven, he said unto the representatives of his church in all ages, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God." The

same distinction is made by the apostle. He exhorts those who were wavering, whether they should forsake their idolatrous friends and relations, to embrace the gospel, for this reason, that then God "would receive them, and be a father to them, and they should be his sons and daughters," 2 Cor. vi.

As God then stands in so near and peculiar a relation to the faithful, what more *rational* than to conclude, his love for them far surpasses the affection of earthly parents towards their offspring? But what parent, worthy of that tender name, ever refuses to manifest the delight he takes in his children, as they are able to bear such kind regard? Or does not study, by numerous expressions of love, to render their state of subjection a pleasure to them? And is it not perfectly reasonable to conclude, that the eternal Father may as sensibly distinguish between believers and hypocrites, as we do between our dutious children, who want encouragement, and stubborn ones, who must be kept under a frown? That, to use his own words, his secret should be with them that fear him, and he should shew them his covenant; whilst others remain at a distance from him, without any spiritual light, grovelling in the pleasures of sin and the things of time, which they basely prefer to God, and all the riches of his grace? Certainly this is a most rational conclusion, especially when it is considered, that, through the whole Bible, believers are declared to be the delight and glory of God.

It is in vain to object against this, as implying too great a stoop in him, and making men of too great importance; because the scripture account of the connexion between God and the faithful strongly affirms that such condescension and regard is paid to them. He, therefore, who is ready upon either of these presumptions to mock at the mention of

joy in God, arising from the near and dear relation believers bear to him, despiseth not man, but his adorable Creator, who promiseth of his superabounding grace, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people," 2 Cor. vi.

It is most reasonable to conclude believers in Christ may experience peculiar delight, because they seek all their joy in God alone. The acquisition of riches will not satisfy them, nor the enjoyment of health, honour, or long life. "Lord, say they, who is like unto thee? Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. This will put more joy into our hearts than the increase of corn and wine." And is it enthusiasm to conclude, that God, who both deserves and strictly requires such supreme affection, should reward every one who pays it to him? Or that when men are so divinely changed as to prefer the favour of God infinitely before their own worldly interest, and every sensual gratification, they should receive the completion of this gracious and ample promise? "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honour are with me, yea, durable riches and righteousness; that I may cause those who love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures," Prov. viii. 17.

Further, we may reasonably conclude that the pleasures believers enjoy are high and peculiar, when we consider the force with which parental love always breaks out towards children, who, zealous for the honour and rights of a father, endure bitter persecution on that account. What possible demonstration of affection is then withheld? If we, therefore, (to use our Lord's argument) being evil, know how to reward, by every evidence of great delight in them, our excellent children, how much more shall our heavenly Father give tokens of his delight in

them who suffer for zeal in his cause, and love of his name?

But no one can be a Christian, according to the scripture definition, without suffering for it. Begin, whoever thou art, by thy example to rebuke not only scandalous vices, but all the shameful hypocrisy of nominal Christians; and thou shalt very soon find enough to try thy courage, patience and fidelity. If thou art poor, the loss of work and bread to eat shall be held up before thee by the ungodly, to deter thee from being more religious than they like. If thou art young, and darest to take more pains to live godly than those about thee choose to take themselves, thou shalt feel a domestic persecution, which, though it makes little noise, is very grievous to flesh and blood. In such cases, does not sound reason justify scripture assertions, teaching us to conclude, God will afford some counterbalance to all the bitter speeches and spiteful usage his confessors experience? "That he will enlighten the eyes of their understanding, to know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards them that believe?" Is it weak and enthusiastic to conclude, there is in all such cases joy imparted from the Lord to fulfil the scripture—"Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of men: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues?" Psal. xxxi 19. The Almighty is represented in this passage as giving his faithful people so lively a sense of his love and protection as keeps them from growing weary in his service, or from any inclination to be less bold for the truth. By his secret consolations they pass their time, as in a pavilion pitched in a delightful garden, though the

strife of opposing or reviling tongues be heard around them.

Which position then is most reasonable and consonant to the scripture character of God, to assert that he does or does not manifest his love in a peculiar degree to those who love him? Allowing the promises in the Bible are truth, judge, who are absurd and grossly mistaken; nominal Christians, positive against any communications of joy; or real believers, who maintain, that a life of self-denial obedience in the service of God abounds with this spiritual blessing.

To conclude this point, it is highly reasonable to suppose the faithful in Christ have joy peculiar to themselves, because their eternal state will differ infinitely from what awaits the world of the ungodly. The latter, hardened, alas! even to the hour of death, will then meet an incensed Judge; remain in all their filthiness, and feel the misery of endless punishment. The former leave the body to enter, we are assured, into the presence of the Lord. I would ask, then, does not reason lead us to conclude some anticipation of this bliss is enjoyed before its fullness? And that the blessed heirs of salvation, who are so soon to inherit the promises in their utmost completion, should have delightful acquaintance with their meaning here, and joy in their God, the same in kind as that reserved for them in heaven? That those whom the King of kings will reward with eternal glory, in the presence of men and angels, should rejoice in the blessed hope, be sealed of him, and have the earnest of his Spirit in their hearts? Is not this much more reasonable than to suppose that men, who in one day may be as widely distant from each other as heaven and hell, should be alike destitute of any spiritual joy; should both be left to go on till the hour of final separation, one no more than

the other experiencing the light of God's countenance? Certainly no man can name a greater absurdity than this supposition.

What has been offered proves sufficiently, I trust, it is no mark of a weak enthusiastic mind to conclude the members of Christ have peculiar and great delight, which, though often decried as delusion, appears, upon due examination, *perfectly rational*.

Thus far I have argued only in favour of the *reasonableness* of concluding real Christians *may* possess joy in God. But I advance farther, and prove, by the highest authority, that they *actually do*—because the prophets foretel, the Redeemer promises, and the apostles record, the admirable joy peculiar to the church of Christ.

The prophets foretel it in terms as strong and clear as either the holiness of Christians, or the glory of their Redeemer. In the 89th Psalm, the whole body of the faithful are described in the following words: "Blessed is the people who know the joyful sound. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted: for thou art the glory of their strength, and in thy favour their horn shall be exalted. For the Lord is our defence, the holy One of Israel is our king." What stronger colours could be used to paint a life, which was one scene of pleasure? For the abounding joy believers in Christ possess from the knowledge of redemption by him, as revealed in the everlasting gospel, here called *the joyful sound*, is the principal figure which in this painting strikes every eye.

Under the direction of the same unerring Spirit, Isaiah describes the Christian church "as joying before God according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil; [whilst the sole

cause of their exultation is, that] unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," Isaiah ix. 6.

In another passage, he describes the church of Christ under the image of persons invited by the Lord of Hosts to a great festivity, where pleasures crowd to regale each appetite, and every thing which can exhilarate is poured forth in great abundance, Isaiah xxv. In a third passage, he describes them returning to Sion, or heaven, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. Each of these passages (with a vast number more that might be produced) wholly relate to the temper of mind by which the church of Christ should be distinguished. This is always mentioned as the proper state of those happy souls to whom it is given to believe in Christ. But does the picture bear the least resemblance to the persons it is drawn for, unless real Christians are a people much acquainted with pleasure? Between nominal Christians, who have no more joy in God than a Turk or Jew, and the Christians, described by the prophets, there is no likeness. Yet so positive are the prophets in affirming such pleasure shall be enjoyed in the church of Christ, that the faithfulness and veracity of God stand engaged to make good the delightful prediction. And unless we deny the authority of the prophetic books, we must allow Christians certainly possess incomparable joys.

What the prophets with one mouth foretold, the Redeemer confirms by many declarations and promises. On account of the joy his gospel, when understood and believed, inspires—"The kingdom of heaven, says he, is like unto a treasure hid in a field, the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and, for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he

hath, and buyeth that field," Matthew xiii. 44. We know how much the news of an estate unexpectedly left to us elevates the poor heart of man. In the same manner, our Lord affirms, a clear view of salvation by him affects his believing people. In another place, he declares that the immediate effect of faith in his name is such abundant satisfaction of soul, as extinguishes all burning desire after any thing below. and causes fresh consolations to spring up to an overflowing fulness, till all the believer's wants are entirely removed, and all his desires completely satisfied in the enjoyment of eternal life. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 14. "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." But this spake Jesus of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive, John vii. How could the joy of Christians be more strongly described, or more positively affirmed? And this enjoyment is not confined to some eminent followers of Christ, but insured as the common privilege of all who drink of the water he giveth, of every one who believeth on his name. What Jesus taught the woman of Samaria at one time, and the vast concourse of his hearers at another, respecting the peace and joy which result from faith in his name, under the figure of a fountain, and rivers of living water, he literally affirms in his last conversation with his apostles. "He that hath my commandments [understands, receives, and embraces them all,] and keepeth them, [not only extols, but will not break them, whatever he may lose or suffer on that account,] he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him." He shall not only *be*

the object of my delight and love, but live favoured with discoveries of my power, grace, and faithfulness. One of his disciples, clearly understanding the Redeemer meant some inestimable favour, which they, and not the world, were to enjoy, asks him, "How is it, that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If any man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him;" not leaving him as one friend does another, after a transient visit, but as an inhabitant, giving, by our presence, light, strength, comfort, and joy. And lest it should be thought, as many most absurdly pretend to believe, that Christians in every age are not so fully to inherit these promises, as the very persons to whom he first made them, he comprehends, in the same prevailing prayer which he made for the apostles, "all who should ever believe in him through their word." He makes no manner of difference or distinction. Woe be to those who do. He makes one and the same request for his whole church, every individual belonging to it being equally a member of his body—He prays, "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." John xvii 26.

Every thing requested for the church of Christ in this prayer, and every feature in the picture which the prophets have drawn of believers in his name, we see in those who first received the faith of the gospel. After the day of Pentecost, the apostolic church is described in several particulars. And their state of mind, which shewed itself indeed in their actions, is sufficiently marked out by two words: *gladness*, or exultation, and *singleness of heart*. In the same book of the Acts, after mention of Philip's preaching in the city of Samaria, it is remarked, there *was great joy* in that city. When the jailor, into whose custody St. Paul

was delivered, had once heard the word of the Lord, besides the actions which he did immediately upon believing, which plainly shewed great alacrity of heart, it is expressly added, *that he rejoiced*. The same account is given of the Ethiopian eunuch. "As soon as Philip had preached Jesus unto him, he was baptized, and though his heaven-appointed guide was snatched from him, yet the gospel taking place in his heart, *he went on his way* (it is not said reasoning, or deeply meditating only, but) *rejoicing*. Indeed we have reason to think that all who heard the gospel to any good purpose, heard it with the same sentiments of delight and joy. They behaved at first as persons quite amazed and surprised with the grace of God. Before habit or improvement could have time to manifest itself, they were raised by the pure joy of the gospel above this world, and ready, in its defence, to embrace the martyr's stake."

From what has been said, it appears that not only the prophets foretold the faithful in Christ should proclaim the incomparable worth of his gospel by their joy in God; not only did the Redeemer promise his peace and joy to his disciples, and declare that their joy should be full; but when his name was first preached, the genuine effect of it, in every place, was gladness of heart. You must, therefore, either affirm, that the christians described in the Bible, and those who lived when the gospel was first preached, differ in species from all who live now, though they sincerely profess the same faith, and love the same Lord, or you must grant it is a fact, that all real Christians have joy in the God of their salvation.

## SUNDAY LII.

## CHAP. LII.

The Love of Christ to his Church in all Ages the same.

WE have already proved it is reasonable to conclude, and certain from the testimony of Christ, the prophets, and apostles, that peace and joy in God are the privilege of Christ's church.

It is urged, to invalidate these proofs, that persecution in the first ages of Christianity called for great manifestations of divine love, which are now no longer to be expected or vouchsafed.

As this mistake is become very general, and its influence extremely pernicious, it shall receive a full refutation, and be exposed in all its absurdity.

Adopt this false notion, and scripture itself must lose its value. For we may say with as much reason of the whole, as of those passages which have been urged above, that they were delivered to particular persons on particular occasions. Wherefore, if scripture belongs to those to whom it was first addressed, in a sense it belongs not to the church in every age; then the Bible, instead of being a system of eternal truth, and an invariable rule of life, equally obligatory on all Christians, will dwindle into an antiquated obsolete book. It will absolutely require a discrimination to be settled between the scripture designed for the comfort and joy of the first believers in Christ, and what those live in after ages may claim: just as some Papist divide the practical part of the New Testament into absolute commands,

which belong to all, and counsels of perfection given only to a few.

Besides, this notion is contrary to scripture. St. John declares the end for which he labour to establish Christianity was not merely the belief of the miracles, death, and resurrection of Christ, but *that ye, saith he, might have fellowship with us, i. e.* an equal share in all the high privileges, holy influences, and divine consolations which belong to that one body the church, of which Christ himself, full of power and glory, is the head. But we flatly contradict this apostle, when we affirm there is any difference in point of spiritual privileges between even the chosen twelve, and all who have obtained like precious faith with them, to the end of time.

Further, the absurdity of this popular and pernicious mistake is no less gross than its contradiction to the word of God is glaring. For have not all Christians one faith? The truth which sanctifies them is invariable. Have they not one Spirit to represent this truth to the mind, and make it effectual? Is not the practice of duty in the same extent required? the same sacrifice of worldly interests? the cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye? And is not one heaven the eternal reward of all true Christians? As, in all these interesting points, there is a perfect equality, how absurd to make an immense difference in the matter of present peace and joy from the influence of the same truth, the same hope, and the same Spirit? This is the more absurd, because the word of God teaches us that no one is ever disposed to apply to the heavenly physician before the sickness of his soul compels him, and the fear of eternal death; and that no one can be saved before he calls for mercy on the Lord as a lost sinner. But this conviction annihilates all distance of time, all difference of external circumstances

between the contemporaries of Christ and his apostles, and succeeding believers, to the end of the world; because, without this conviction of sin, though Paul was preaching, or Jesus himself working miracles before our eyes, his salvation must be rejected; and with this conviction pressing on the mind, the record God has given of his Son becomes inestimably precious, and his salvation the one thing needful.

Thus absurd is the notion so constantly urged, to evade the plainest promises of great peace and joy to all true believers, and to keep those easy in a formal profession of Christianity, who experience nothing of its excellent power.

We must add the evidence of daily facts to the united testimony of prophets, apostles, and the Saviour, that real believers in his name have joy in God. How can we otherwise account for the total alteration of choice and conduct in some of every rank, age, and temper, as soon as they truly believe in Christ? All these with one voice avow they never knew *true happiness* before they knew the truth. Whatever the pleasures of sin were to them, they confess is far exceeded by their spiritual joy. Hence, long after the terrors of the Lord have ceased to work upon their minds, they keep at a distance from sin, from persons, pleasures, and amusements, which before engaged their hearts, in order to possess the peace and pleasures they have tasted in the service of Christ.

Nor can it be said, with any truth, all this arises from notions put into their heads, or from the force of imagination; because a great number have had no idea of spiritual joy, till it sprang up in their hearts, at once the object of their surprise, and the cause of their preferring above all things the service of the Lord. Whilst the perfect correspondence this spi-

ritual joy bears with the scripture promises, its foundation, and the uniform experience of those who have had no means of catching it from others, concur to deliver it from all reasonable suspicion of religious delusion.

We may further observe, that there are many children whose meek spirit and excellent life cannot reconcile their prejudiced parents to the power of religion, by whom they are treated with great harshness, no one speaking a word in their favour. These children are still far from desiring peace, by returning to their former gaiety and fashionable follies. They find a sweetness in secret prayer, in meditation, and reading the word of God, which, even under their beloved parents' cruel displeasure, is better to them than all their former merriment, with the friendship of the whole family.

If it be said, who knows there have been such instances? I answer, the history of the church attests there have been, in all ages, a great number; and the excellent part of the Christian church at this day, young as well as old, vouch this truth. It is on account of better pleasures not from morose humour, or superstitious fear, that they have lost all relish for amusements they once pursued with eagerness, despising all who did not, as they themselves are now despised. Unless, therefore, we shut our ears against the testimony of scripture, and our eyes against the testimony of daily facts, we must allow, that all who receive and obey the Lord Jesus Christ are superior, in point of joy, to any people upon earth.

As this *is* fact, so it is necessary Christians should be filled with peace and joy. Were men of a different make, or in a world more favourable to the cause of God, it would be then sufficient to mark out the line of duty, too plain to be mistaken, and enforce it

with *future* rewards so great, that no pleasure or gain from sin could weigh in the balance. But it is plain, from the slightest consideration of our nature, that we greedily grasp after present joy, and from our birth have impetuous inclinations to *take pleasure* in what is evil and forbidden. Look upon young men. How are they prompted from within, and solicited from without, to transgress, the moment they enter on the stage of the world! How biassed to prefer vile pastimes and joys of sense to all wise employment of their time! With what indifference, if not strong disgust, do they hear the authority of God condemning their favourite pleasures! The female sex, though more restrained from excesses in youth, as eagerly delight in every vanity—in the least distinction for elegance of form, gaudy attire, or splendid appearance. Pleased they are to walk with out-stretched necks and wanton eyes; above measure fond of levity and dissipation, of course obstinately averse to Christian faith and obedience. In the next period of life though the objects of gratification somewhat vary, still inordinate affection towards them remains as vehement as ever; still love of money, ambition, luxury, or pride of life, leads the soul captive.

Such is our constitution; and from it arises the necessity of present spiritual peace and joy, to reconcile us perfectly to a Christian life. Without these, teachers recommend, in vain, the practice of duty on account of its *future* rewards, in preference to present gratification. This reward is only to be enjoyed after death, which men naturally choose to put at a great distance. Make, on the contrary, the proposal the Redeemer makes to his disciples, to establish them in his service; prove “there is no man that hath left houses, or brethren, or sister, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for his sake and the gospel’s but (in point of enjoyment, through the

consolations of Christ, and the favour of his providence) he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and bonds, with persecution, and, in the world to come, eternal life;" Mark. x. Here you see an immediate equivalent for any sacrifice you are to make in love to Christ, and cheerful obedience to his will. This renders self-denial not only practicable, but, upon the whole, grateful. Here is not what otherwise must be mere authority to overawe, or selfish regard to escape the bitter pains of hell, but such spiritual delight as makes us entirely approve of our choice, and freely avow, to the glory of God, that we were utterly depraved and blind for not embracing him and his service, as our highest and richest portion before.

Besides, it is *necessary* believers should have much peace and joy in the service of God, that they may "observe and do whatsoever they are commanded. They are commanded in every thing to give thanks, to rejoice in the Lord evermore, to be content with such things as they have and to be patient in tribulation." These tempers are but a just acknowledgment of the mercies of redemption. But these tempers cannot dwell in the soul, till, by the power of divine faith, it inherits spiritual blessings, which naturally excite thanksgiving, which reduce sufferings, most formidable in the eye of sense, to light afflictions, and self-denials, grievous to the flesh, into pleasing testimonies of unfeigned love to God — Take away these views, and suppose no delight to spring up in the heart from the knowledge of Christ, it will be then impossible to rejoice in tribulation, and under every cross to give thanks. "But if we are, indeed, risen with Christ, if our life is hid with him in God, and we know that when he who is our life shall appear, we shall appear also with him

in glory, then victory over our natural fears, and contentment in the most trying troubles are quite practicable." And it were easy to prove, from the New Testament, that true Christians are requested in every thing to give thanks, because they have received of the Lord such rich tokens of his love. It follows, therefore, that, unless we have joy in God, our hearts will be enamoured of some mean and base object to his dishonour, and our own ruin; nor shall we be able to give him the glory of a cheerful submission to his will in all things. Comparing, therefore, our condition with the obedience and tempers of a real believer, it must be allowed, there is absolute need of spiritual peace and joy peculiar to believers, and superior to every thing the world can offer; and all who will submit to the authority of scripture must be convinced of the reasonableness, reality, and excellent use of joy in God.

I shall only add a caution against a wrong construction of this grand privilege of the Christian church, and an exhortation to all, as they desire present happiness, to seek, in the first place, the knowledge of Christ.

It must be remembered, then, that the peace and joy proved above vary in degree, according to several circumstances. The weak in faith enjoy but little in comparison of the strong. A small storm is enough to terrify the former, and make them dread a shipwreck; whilst the latter, from clearer knowledge of God's will and loving-kindness, can trust, without pain to the care of their unerring pilot, though the tempest rages, and neither sun, or moon, or stars, are seen for many days. Contempt, reproach, and slanders, wound exceedingly new disciples, who over-rate the judgment of men; whilst those who are duly mortified to the world, can wait with cheerfulness till their innocence is vindicated

by the Lord, whom they serve. Some are apt soon to yield to discouraging appearances, if the severity of a conflict with their vile affections continues; whilst others, like veteran soldiers, can follow, undaunted, the captain of their salvation, in the hottest of the battle. Some (new-born babes, as the scripture calls them,) ignorant of the discipline of their father's house, find it difficult to believe they are his dear children, when they strongly feel the distemper of their nature, or lose the sensible sweetness of communion with God; or are sorely afflicted for a great length of time, whilst others who judge truly, and understand his mind and will, no longer estimate their own safety or growth in grace, *solely* by their own feelings. Some, full of desire to be without spot, and, imperceptibly to themselves, trusting in part to their own graces, are ready to despond at the sight of their infirmities, and the many blemishes found in the best; whilst others, of clearer judgment and more knowledge, only sink deeper into self-abasement, and, at the sight of both, cleave more steadfastly to Christ their hope, and so hold fast the confidence of their rejoicing. Some are in constitution alert, lively, and confident, which makes them more joyous, in the same circumstances, than those who are phlegmatic, dull, and timorous in their spirit.

In the same persons also, at different times, spiritual peace and joy will often vary, from the stupifying power of bodily disease, and according to their temptations, diligence in holy duties, faithfulness to God, and his good pleasure, from whom all consolations flow. Whilst, therefore, we strenuously maintain the divine privilege of Christians is to rejoice in the Lord, still the degree or continuance of that joy must not be absolutely fixed, or made essential to saving faith. For then we shall often make sad

the hearts of the righteous, whom God would not have made sad; and instead of strengthening the weak, and encouraging them to go on, beat them down. Nevertheless, if professors of faith in Christ are habitually strangers to joy in God, and pleasure in his service, of which so many excellent things are spoken in the Bible, they have great reason to suspect they are counterfeits. It behoves them much to examine whether some hateful idol, as money; or forbidden pleasure, husband, wife, or child, does not rob God of their hearts: or whether they have not mean thoughts of Christ's power and grace, but high ones of man's obedience to obtain favour with God. This scrutiny is quite necessary, and ought to be repeated with great strictness, because it is certain the proper abiding state of real Christians is that of pleasure: "The kingdom of God whithin them is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The great apostle was of this judgment; therefore he earnestly prayed for the church at Rome, that "the God of hope would fill them with all peace and joy in believing, and cause them to abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost given unto them.

Since, then, the present advantages of true faith are so great, who can have the feelings of humanity, in the lowest degree, and not pray to God, O that all who hear this day the sound of the gospel, were altogether Christians! O that the tongues of all in the sacred office were employed, and the arm of the Lord revealed, to compel our fellow-sinners to come in to that grand festivity for the soul which he hath prepared, that his house might be filled!

Ye young, ye gay, ye rich, and noble, be no longer prejudiced against the Saviour, as if his excellent precepts were too strict a rule for you to observe. Examine the matter closely; make trial of

submission to him without reserve. You will find his gospel an embassy of peace and reconciliation from God, who is love, to a world of rebels up in arms against him ; an assemblage of privileges, promises, and spiritual delights, suited to all your wants, more than equal to your desires, and thus designed to knit your hearts unto him.

Cease for ever, ye deluded vassals, to indulge in unlawful love for women, wine, wealth, or honour, as if, without these base sources of gratification, ye must be miserable. Hear, and be persuaded ; the Possessor of heaven and earth makes a marriage supper for his Son ; that Son, respecting such as you, says, " I stand at the door and knock ; if any man open, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me ;" i. e. we will then dwell together on terms of infinite friendship, and, in reciprocal love, feast together. Consider this as ye ought. I urge not the doom to which you are exposed, whilst ye refuse to hear his voice, who speaketh thus from heaven. I insist not on that hour, which is near, when all your filthy sources of joy will be terribly transformed into avengers of your wickedness. I do not attempt to lay open the horrors of " Tophet, which is deep and large ; the pile thereof is fire and much wood ; and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." But I beseech you, by the consolations that are in Christ, by the comforts of love, and by the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, call upon God, that you may lay aside all wickedness and superfluity of naughtiness, in order that you may *immediately* taste the pure joys which flow down from the throne of God into the hearts of his faithful people. Deal no more so madly as to prefer, for the sake of pleasure, the harlot's embrace, or the drunkard's cup, the love of the world, and the things of the world, to the river.

which maketh glad the church in earth and heaven. Make no longer the hideous choice of darkness and estrangement from the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, before the light of life; an education for everlasting glory, with an earnest of it from day to day in your own souls.

Consider what a cloud of witnesses are ready to confront and confound you. Appear before these witnesses you must. They felt so much peace and joy in the service of Christ, as gladly to renounce every comfort of life, sooner than be false to him; and, rather than deny him, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and met death from their enraged persecutors. The same Saviour, no more impaired in excellency, or the riches of his love, than the sun in brightness, presents himself with these gracious words proceeding from his lips, "Whosoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely."

And can you be such despicable dupes to the maxims of the world, and your own wild passions, as to be *afraid* of coming into full subjection to Christ, lest you should *suffer* in point of *present* enjoyment? Suffer! Impossible: for all you are required to give up is sordid, selfish, and the prostitution of your souls to Satan. Be assured, of all the gross falsehoods he makes the most credulous fools swallow, this bears the palm, to imagine any pleasures upon earth equal to those which flow from the knowledge and love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, be instructed, ye decent self-righteous professors of religion. Strive no longer to glean up some grains of satisfaction from a good opinion of yourselves, the works you do, and the religious principles you hold. No longer tread the tiresome round of duties, as a penance to escape damnation, and purchase favour of God. Uncomfortable, sense-

less service! Thus he addresses such serious, but sadly deceived persons: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

"Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Hear, and your soul shall live, and I will give you the sure mercies of Daved, i. e. CHRIST. Behold I have given him for a witness [of my free grace and love] to the people, a leader and commander to the people."

Make Christ, then, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and last, the beginning and end of all your religion, and great will be your peace. You shall delight yourselves in the Lord, and he shall give you your hearts' desire. Then you shall see the words in which Moses describes the church of God in old time, are applicable in a still higher sense to the body of Christ, his faithful followers. What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? *Happy* art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency? and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

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## PRAYER,

Suited to the preceding Subject.

**BLESSED** be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed his church with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly things in Christ Jesus. But to us belongeth shame and confusion of face,

who so long denied the reality of these blessings, or felt no desire to enjoy them. We have sought greedily to satisfy ourselves with base and sensual delights. O pardon our sin and provocation. Now make us to know thou art our supreme good, and that the revelation of thy truth, peace, and love, is better than all the pleasures of sin. Be not unto us as a God that hideth thyself. Give now to all who come to thee by Christ Jesus joy in the Holy Ghost, as thou didst to thy saints of old. Enable each to cry out, I have trusted in thy mercy, my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me. Make us exceedingly glad with thy countenance. Let all that seek thee be joyful and glad in thee; let such as love thy salvation say continually, the Lord be magnified. Send the spirit of adoption into our hearts, that we may cry, Abba, Father; that we may be anxious for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make known our requests unto thee; that so thy peace, which passeth all understanding, may rule in our hearts through Jesus Christ our Lord. Fill us with assurance that thy eyes are always over the righteous, and thine ears ever open to their prayers, that in the midst of trouble we may find comfort, and have thee for our exceeding joy.

O Lord and heavenly Father, pity and deliver from their wilful ignorance the multitude, who make light of the feast thou hast provided for them who love thee, even before they are received up into glory. Say unto them, O ye sons of men, how long will ye blaspheme my honour, and give your hearts only to that which defiles, wounds, and will destroy you? O that they may experience that thy love gives more joy than the full indulgence of base appetites. May they ponder on this inestimable truth, that thou,

Lord, art a sun and a shield, that thou givest grace and glory, and no good thing dost thou withhold from them who lead a godly life.

May the Lord Jesus Christ, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort our hearts, and establish us in every good word and work. *Amen.*

# OFFICES OF DEVOTION

FOR THE

USE OF FAMILIES,

AND FOR

*Persons in Various Conditions.*

The following admonition, read occasionally before family-worship, is very proper to produce seriousness of mind, and to keep up a godly jealousy, lest hypocrisy and formality render this important duty of no use. It is necessary to preserve us from shamefully contradicting in our tempers through the day, the prayers we offer up. This horrid absurdity hath greatly contributed to banish family-worship, as a practice of no benefit.

My Friends and Fellow Christians,

**WE**, dust and ashes, are now met to call upon the Lord God Almighty. He deserves all possible adoration and reverence. He also strictly charges us to take heed we draw not nigh to him with our lips, whilst our hearts are far from him. He assures us, he will exalt those only who abase themselves, and give grace only to the humble. He is also of purer eyes than to accept our prayers, unless they be offered up in dependence upon the mediation of Jesus Christ the righteous, our advocate, and the propitiation for our sin.

Now, therefore, may we have grace to lift up our hearts to God with sincerity, reverence, lowliness of mind, and lively faith in Christ; then shall we receive whatever we ask according to his will. With these dispositions, we should at all times desire to pray. So shall our worship be pleasing to God, comfortable to ourselves, and make us excellent in our tempers to every one about us.

## Family Prayer for the Morning of the Lord's Day.

ALL praise be given unto thee, O God, our heavenly Father, for this holy day, in which we imitate the company in heaven, whilst we assemble in thy courts on earth.

Instead of rejecting us for our pride, and wilful ignorance, and forgetfulness of thee, thou hast set apart thy day to teach us the knowledge of thy name, and of our own condition. Thou hast commanded us to make public confession of our sins, and thy perfect hatred of them; of our manifold disobedience, and thy amazing forbearance; of our depravity and perpetual need of thy grace. Thou hast commanded us thus to abase ourselves before thee, lest a proud, self-sufficient spirit should destroy us. Thou hast commanded us to make intercession for all men, that our hearts may be enlarged in love towards them, and our hands ready to minister to their necessities. Thou hast sent thy word unto us for reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. And thou hast required us to give thee thanks in the great congregation, in order that our hearts may be filled with gratitude to thee for all thy benefits. O how amiable on these accounts, Lord God of hosts, are thy houses in our land! We especially adore thy goodness, in passing over the provocations and insults we have so often repeated, by rushing into thy house, in pride, hypocrisy, and contempt of thy salvation. Instead of cutting us off in this most dreadful state, thou hast been pleased to lay it all open to our view. Therefore we now, on our knees, implore of thee every disposition of heart which can make us acceptable worshippers. O our God, send forth light and truth, forcibly to impress us with the great importance of the work we have to

do. Shield us from all distractions. Whilst we confess our sins, fill us with deep self-abasement and godly sorrow. Give us to ask in full assurance of receiving the things we need, pardon, righteousness, and strength, from thy love in Christ Jesus. Accompany thy oracles, and the preaching of thy servants with the power of the Holy Ghost, that we may be more wise, and more diligent to follow the examples set before us : that thy judgments and threatenings against transgressors may deter us from walking after the flesh, and the fashion of this world. O that, by hearing thy gospel, we may clearly perceive, and gladly embrace the great salvation it proclaims, and be careful to observe and do whatsoever our Lord commands. And when we offer up our prayers for all estates and conditions of men, give us to feel bowels of mercies, and to beg for their support, deliverance, and salvation, as for our own.

Thou knowest, Lord, our sad condition; that when we would do good, as thy holy law requires, evil is present with us. We would wait upon thee without a wandering thought; but our weakness and depravity, alas! are manifest, after all our endeavours to be wholly taken up in thy service. Arise, O God, and save us from those idle thoughts, which else will hinder our prayers; and though we can have nothing to rejoice in what we do, may we rejoice in thy goodness and tender mercies, in the redemption of our souls by the blood of Jesus, and in thy exceeding great and precious promises.

Thou, Lord, hast appointed pastors and teachers, whose lips should retain knowledge, and the people are to be instructed in thy law from their mouths. We pray thee to give unto them all the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that they may be taught how to lay, like able builders, the true foundation; and, by their preaching, may

knowledge be increased, and sinners turned from their evil ways. By their preaching, may thy children be comforted and established, the beauty of holiness and the sinfulness of sin be effectually set forth; that after due improvement of thy day, house, and word, we may for ever rejoice in the rest which remaineth for all the people of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

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Evening Family Prayer on the Lord's Day.

THOU, O Lord our God, art great, wonderful, and holy. Thou art exalted far above all blessings and praise which men or angels can offer; yet thou hast taught us, that whoever offereth thee thanks, he honoureth thee. Much cause have we now to praise thy name for thine ordinances, which we have this day observed. Pardon the iniquity of our holy things, and cleanse us from the defilement cleaving to our best services. Accept our prayers and praises, for the sake and through the intercession of our great and merciful High-Priest. For his sake, O heavenly Father, fulfil all the requests we have made this day before thee, that the benefit we gain in calling upon thy name together may be manifest in our deportment, and felt in our hearts. Thus may we love and serve thee, waiting in joyful hope for that hour when we shall see thee face to face, and know even as we are known.

To thy mercy we recommend all our relations, and all our friends. Enlighten their minds, that they may not profane thy holy day; give them grace to worship thee in spirit and in truth, with the great congregation; to spend their time with joy in retirement, and secret prayer, and meditation upon the multitude of mercies they have received from thy hand.

Visit, O Lord, the nations yet sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. May the day spring from on high shine upon them, to guide their feet into the way of peace. O that the fulness of the Gentiles may come into Christ, and all Israel be saved! O that the mountain of the Lord's house may be established upon the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, and the earth be filled with the glory of the Lord!

We beseech thee, O Lord, to put an end to all idolatry and superstition in the nations called after thy name. Cause the power of godliness to flourish in all thy churches. Utterly destroy formality and hypocrisy amongst the professors of thy holy faith, that there be no offence given to scoffers, or that they should have any cause to say, what advantage does the gospel of Christ impart?

Take us this night, O our God, under the shadow of thy wing. When we awake, may we think of thee: and if our life is spared to the return of day, may we walk in the light of thy countenance, and in all thy commandments blameless. And when our departure is at hand, may we enjoy a sweet foretaste of heavenly bliss, and know, that when we are removed from waiting upon thee in the courts of thy house below, we shall, with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, for ever laud and magnify thy name. O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom be ascribed, as is most due, glory and dominion for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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Morning Prayer for a Family.

O BLESSED GOD, who hast so loved the world, as to give thine only begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in him should not perish, but have eternal life, mercifully look upon us, miserable

sinner. How ignorant are we of his excellency, or our need of his salvation! How unaffected with all we have heard of his glory! Though his name is above every name in heaven, we feel an horrid backwardness to trust our souls in his hand, and little comfort from what he has done or promised. O reveal to us, by the Holy Ghost, the person, office, love, and power of thy Christ. O that *He* may be no less precious to our souls, than he was to the saints and martyrs of old. Thou hast declared thy Son shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high; may he be so in our eyes more and more. Through faith in his name, may we receive daily the pardon of our sins, the comfort of thy help, and abound in hope of the glory of God. May the love of Christ constrain us to live to his honour by loving one another. Objects always of his compassion, and saved by the redemption that is in him, may we be able to forbear and forgive, putting far from us all anger, strife, and variance. O let a life of meekness, quietness, and peace, be the fruit of our daily worship. For the credit of our holy profession, and that our very prayers may not be turned into sin, make us who dwell together to be of one mind, and to build up each other in our holy faith. By thy good providence, O God, our heavenly Father, preserve us, if it please thee, from all evil and mischief, from fierce disease and torturing pain. In the midst of our prosperity, may we stand prepared for a change. O may we be able to glorify thee in tribulation, and on a bed of languishing. For this purpose, establish us still more in Christ Jesus, seal us unto the day of redemption, and give us in our hearts the earnest of thy Spirit.

To all our near relations and kind friends, be merciful and gracious, O Lord our God. May they be led to give a deep attention to the care of their souls,

and overcome by faith in Christ this present evil world. Be a God unto them, and a guide all their days upon earth; and after death may they be received up into glory.

Make the nation to which we belong a people fearing thy name. Bless all who are put in authority over us. Visit, comfort, and deliver all who are in grievous affliction, or oppressed with poverty; love our enemies, bless them who curse us, do good to them who hate us, and enable us to do the same.

Accept our praises for thy perpetual goodness to us ever since we were born, for our sleep by night, for the pleasant return of light and day, for the use of reason and the means of grace, and above all for thy chief mercy, Christ Jesus. With all that is within us we would bless thy name for this unspeakable gift, ascribing to him, with thyself and the Holy Ghost, all honour and praise, might, majesty, and dominion, world without end. *Amen.*

Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

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Evening Prayer for a Family.

**HOLY** and ever-blessed Lord God, thou hast made all things, and orderest all things by thine unerring wisdom. Thou fillest heaven and earth with thy presence, and from thee proceedeth every good and perfect gift.

We, miserable sinners, desire now to approach thee with a contrite spirit, confessing our vileness. We have been full of pride and hypocrisy in thy sight and towards men. We have been all alive to the things of the world, but utterly indifferent to thy cause and glory. Long did we stand out against every call to repentance, and often have we sinned wilfully. We have set at naught thy threatenings and promises, and hardened our hearts under thy

chastisements. We are not able to reckon up all our sins, nor the circumstances which have made them exceedingly sinful. Humble us, we beseech thee, by placing before us all the detestable qualities chargeable upon us in every act of disobedience. O make us perceive clearly how unjust and daring, how rebellious and ungrateful, we have been in casting thy words behind us. Give us to know there is no remission of our sins but through faith in the blood of thy Son; by his blood may we know we are justified, and have peace with thee.

Vouchsafe, O God, to turn us from all iniquity. Create us again after thy own image, that we may live to thy praise. May it be the continual desire of our souls to obey and serve thee, and may life be valued principally by us, as an opportunity of doing thy will and keeping thy commandments before men, that they may see our good works, and be led to glorify thee our heavenly Father.

Bring to our remembrance that solemn account we must give when the throne shall be set, and the books be open. May we, by faith in Christ, and knowledge of his glory, be ready for his appearance. In that great day, may we triumph with all his saints, saying, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

To thy merciful protection, O God, we humbly commend ourselves this night. Defend our persons, our dwelling, and our possessions. Give us, if it please thee, refreshing sleep, that, with strength of body and vigour of mind, we may serve thee, and at last be admitted into that world, whereth ere is no night or sleep, where we shall receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in dependence upon whose righteousness and everlasting intercession, we offer

up unto thee this our family-worship, concluding as  
 he hath taught us to pray,  
 Our father, &c.

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Prayer to be used before Partaking of the Lord's Supper.

IN obedience to thy command, my Saviour and my God, I now come to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, which is designed to set thee forth manifestly crucified before our eyes. O teach me, that I may come with knowledge of the nature and infinite value of thy sacrifice. May I feel my poverty and defilement, and draw nigh with a true heart, utterly rejecting every other way of salvation men naturally trust in, and placing all my hope on thy blood to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. I would come with unfeigned love, designing to make a full surrender of myself to thee, thou Lord over all, and head of the church. Thou wast pleased to forgive the woman who was an infamous sinner, and bid her go in peace. Thou didst declare the publican justified. Thou didst put away the sin of Peter who denied thee with oaths and curses. Thou didst take up the crucified thief immediately into glory, upon turning to thee for mercy. Bless me also, O my Lord; forgive my transgressions as thou didst theirs. In this feast, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me, that I may know that I am justified by thy blood, and shall be certainly preserved and saved by thy life in the presence of God for thy church. When the outward and visible signs of thy meritorious death are put into my hands, may I, by a true faith, eat thy flesh, and drink thy blood, so as to find it meat indeed and drink indeed unto my soul, so that I may dwell in thee, and thou in me; that I may know I have eternal life, and that thou wilt raise me up at the last day.

May thy love for our souls, stronger than death, unite us all in love to each other, as members alike of thy body in the church. Whilst we are all looking upon thee the just suffering for us unjust, may every angry and selfish passion die away. May brotherly love reign in our hearts, and be continually exercised with delight amongst us all. And all the time I sojourn in the flesh, give me, by the power of thy grace to keep the feast upon thee our passover sacrificed for us, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Grant these requests for the glory of thy great name. *Amen.*

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A Prayer proper for Persons under great Difficulties, and when Affairs of great importance are in suspense.

O LORD thou God of wisdom and of might, who hath most graciously commanded us, poor short-sighted creatures, to commit our works unto thee, and promised that our thoughts shall be established; to cast all our care upon thee, assuring us thou carest for us; mercifully receive our prayer which we now make unto thee. So perplexing are our affairs, so doubtful and wavering our minds what course to take, and by what method to extricate ourselves out of our difficulties, that our eyes are fixed upon thee as our only counsellor. Teach us, we beseech thee, what we ought to do, and enable us to choose what, upon the whole, will most conduce to thy glory and our good. All things we know in heaven and earth are ordered and governed by thee, according to the counsel of thy own will, and by a special providence thou makest all things work together for good to them that love thee. Endue our souls with this grace of love to thee, through a knowledge of Christ Jesus, that we may repose ourselves in thee.

and wait without anxiety of mind the event of the matter we have in hand. If the issue is prosperous to us with respect to this world, give us grace, to ascribe our success wholly to thy undeserved mercy, and to retain a grateful sense of it all the days of our life. But if it seemeth good to thee to turn our present suspense into certain adversity, and bring upon us the thing we fear, O grant us sufficient strength to behave aright under thy correction. In our affliction, may we put our whole trust in thy mercy; and so exercise ourselves in submission and humility, in faith and patience, that the prosperity of our souls may be promoted by the continuance or weight of our troubles; and we may be finally able to say, Thou, O God, of very faithfulness, hast caused us to be afflicted. Hear us. O thou God of peace, patience, and consolation, whose kingdom ruleth over all, and whose dominion is from generation to generation, world without end. *Amen.*

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A Prayer when under the Pressure of some heavy Affliction.

O THOU most holy and righteous God, who orderest all things in heaven and in earth, and with the greatest tenderness dost hear the cries of all who put their trust in thee, through Jesus Christ; I believe, Lord, help my unbelief, that in wisdom, mercy, and holiness, thou dost appoint unto me every circumstance of my condition. I desire to look through all second causes to thee, O Lord God, who makest them merely instruments to do thy will, and execute thy purpose respecting the children of men. O thou infinitely wise and gracious Governor of the world, often have I said, *Thy will be done.* But now thou art pleased to afflict me, I find my nature ready to shrink back, and to be clamorous or fretful under the sacred but painful cross. What I have often so

solemnly repeated, I am strongly tempted to unsay; and to wish my own will, not thine, was to take place. Make speed, O God of my salvation, and help me to deny myself, to bow down in free and full submission to thy appointment of my condition. Bring powerfully to my remembrance, I beseech thee, what my mouth hath so often declared in thy presence, that I have deserved all the plagues written in the book of thy law; and that it is mere mercy and rich grace which have kept me from the wages due to my sin, from weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth in torment. Whilst thou art therefore smiting me, O thou righteous Judge of all the earth, give me an heart unfeignedly to adore thy mercy, that, instead of the scourge with which I am now corrected for my profit, thou hast not long since given a commission to the sword of vengeance to do all its dreadful work upon me. O fill my soul with a perfect acquiescence under this affliction, by convincing me that thou, and thou alone, O God, knowest what manner of correction I need. Thy eye discovers the folly, the perverseness, and many sinful disorders of my soul, and canst alone adapt a remedy to the disease. O that I might obtain grace, therefore, to remain in meek subjection to the Father of spirits, and to bear the stroke of thy hand, not merely because none can oppose thy will, but because the stroke is given to heal and bless. Take away from me all thoughts that are without understanding, and so busy to press into my mind, raising objections against this particular way in which I am tried. Make me to believe it is the very affliction proper for the particular state of my soul. And, in the midst of my troubles, let thy comforts, O Lord, refresh my heart, and relieve the weariness and pains of nature, by the supernatural supports of thy grace and spirit. Thy mercies are not restrained, neither is thy hand wax-

ed short ; what thou hast done for thousands of the sons and daughters of affliction, do for me, even for me, O my God. If my heart be less tender, less sensible, thou canst cure that evil and make my present afflictions the means of curing it. Thus, O Lord, let it be ; and at length, in thy due time, and in the way which thou shalt choose, send forth deliverance for me, and shew me thy marvellous loving-kindness ; for I well know how dark soever this night of affliction seem, if thou sayest, Let there be light, there shall be light. O let me patiently wait and quietly hope, till that time of mercy come. Let me be much more concerned to have my affliction sanctified than removed. Number me, O Lord, amongst the happy persons whom, whilst thou chastenest, thou teachest out of thy law. Shew me, I beseech thee, wherefore thou contendest with me ; and whilst I am passing through the furnace of affliction, O let it purge away my dross, and take away all my iniquity. In thy presence, and under the support of thy grace, I can bear any thing, and am willing to bear, if I may grow more conformable to thy will, and more largely partake of thy holiness. As my foolish heart is ready to grow fond of this earth, O let the disappointments and afflictions I meet with in it loosen my affections, and put an end to all my sinful attachments to any thing below. O teach my soul to receive every trouble as a call to cease from expecting any thing from the creature, and to be preparing for that hour which shall put an end to all the sorrows and trials of the righteous, and give them an entrance into the everlasting kingdom through the blood of the Lamb, in which they wash their robes white. O Lord, hear ; O Lord, perform and do ; defer not, I beseech thee, lest my spirit faint before thee, and the flesh which thou hast made. *Amen.*

A Prayer before a Journey, for a Person who is to travel by himself.

THINE is the power, O Lord, and the dominion in all places; both at home and abroad all our safety standeth in thy protection and mercy. To thee therefore do I now direct my prayer, called by my necessary business from my own habitation. Many, I know, and peculiar are the dangers, both with respect to body and soul, to which travellers are exposed: and by his own strength or wisdom no man is able to avoid them. Compass me therefore about with thy favour, O God, as with a shield; guard both my person and property from the sons of violence and blood; preserve my body in health and strength: and as I shall be much alone by the way, grant that I may reflect and consider much on thy truth, thy grace, and salvation, and be able to say, I am not alone, but the Father, Son, and Spirit, by their sacred influences, are with me. Whatever company I come into, preserve me from complying with any solicitations to sin, and from being at all conformed to the manners of the profane. Endue me with knowledge and discretion, that I may not, without cause, make myself a derision to the ungodly; nor for fear of the faces of men, do or say any thing to wound my own conscience, to grieve thy Spirit, and to lead the careless to think I am of the same disposition with themselves.

Cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of thy holy Spirit. Suffer me not to look upon a woman with a lustful desire. Let no presumption on the advantage of being unknown in any place where I come, seduce me to act in a manner I should be ashamed of amongst my friends and neighbours. Whatever business I have to transact, give me grace, O God, to do it with all good conscience, abhorring deceit, fraud, and lying.

For all these mercies I make my prayer unto thee, the God of my life, and in faith I commend myself into thy hands, beseeching thee that no evil may befall me. Nevertheless, if it be thy pleasure to appoint unto me in this my journey some disaster, either of falling among thieves who shall rob me, or breaking of a limb, or to visit me with sickness; give me, I beseech thee, patience, faith, and comfort in the midst of my trouble, and full assurance that all things shall work together for good to them that love thee. And after all my travels here, bring me, O my heavenly Father, at last to thy holy hill, through the greatness of thy mercy to me in thy dear Son and my only Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

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A Thanksgiving after a safe Journey.

O MY most merciful and gracious God, I desire to take this first opportunity of returning to thee my most hearty thanks for this fresh instance of thy love to me, manifested through my whole journey. Thou hast preserved me from every peril and sad accident to which I was exposed. Thou hast surrounded me with blessings on every side. I might now have been groaning under the pain of broken bones, of bruised limbs, or other terrible disasters; yea, I might suddenly have been dashed in pieces on the ground, or perished far from all help, and my friends and family been shocked with the doleful tidings. But instead of these miseries thou hast kept me in safety: thou hast brought me to see my habitation in peace, and all things here in prosperity. Every day thy mercy and goodness, O Lord, did prevent and follow me. O how unwearied is thy bounty towards such polluted and depraved creatures as we are! And now grant, I beseech thee,

that the sense of thy love to me may create in me such love for thy name, and for whatsoever thou dost command, that I may cheerfully, and with full purpose of heart, devote myself to thy service, and serve thee with all my strength. Grant me both this, and every other blessing I need, for the sake of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

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A Prayer for a Family when any Member of it is sick, proper for Morning or Evening.

O THOU infinitely great and glorious God, thou killest and makest alive. Thou woundest, and thy hands make whole; thou bringest down to the grave, and bringest back again. Thou dost according to thy will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay thine hand, or say unto thee, What dost thou? Yet righteous art thou in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works. Even when thou afflictest and causest trouble and heaviness to fall upon us, it is that we may learn righteousness from thy judgments, and receive profit from thy correction. Wherefore, though thou hast now visited our house with sickness, and art calling us to humiliation for our sins, yet we would still speak good of thy name, and love and bless thee. We desire at this season to remember all the past mercies with which thou hast been pleased to bless us and our household. God forbid that our present grief should make us unmindful of the constant benefits, we have enjoyed. How long has each of our family lain down and risen up, gone out and come in, in health, strength and peace? How long has the candle of the Lord shone upon us without intermission? For these multiplied favours, blessed, O Lord, by thy good and holy name; since the smallest of benefits is more than we deserved, and the sharpest affliction less. For to us, on account of

our transgressions, is most justly due indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. Wherefore, then, should living men complain; men and transgressors, for the punishment of their sins? Shall we receive so much good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil; patiently and contentedly receive evil also? This temper we know, O Lord, is our bounden duty; O form it in us. And as, in great compassion to us, thou hast opened a way of relief for us under every trouble, by directing, commanding, and encouraging us, in all our afflictions, to pour out our complaints unto thee, and tell thee of all we fear and feel; to thee, O Father of mercies, do we make our supplication at this time. O Lord, be not far from us. In entire submission to thy most wise and holy will, do we now earnestly pray for that person whose sickness fills us with so much concern. O look upon him (or her) in his low estate; suffer not, we beseech thee, his disorder to proceed, and let not this sickness be unto death, but for the manifestation of thy grace towards us all. Thou knowest, Lord, his frame; lay no more upon him than thou wilt enable him to bear with patience and quietness of mind. And, O thou great physician, without whom all others are of no value, do thou direct to the most proper medicines, and bless the art of healing to his body, and our great comfort. In thy due time, restore thy servant to health and strength again, that he may have a longer day of grace and salvation, prove more useful, and do more good in his generation. In the mean time, however thou shalt think fit to dispose of him, O sanctify unto him this affliction; work in him deep humiliation for his sin; bless him with repentance unto life; enable him by faith to behold the Lamb of God, and to trust in the fountain opened in his blood for the remission of sins, that, being justified

through faith, he may have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Make all his bed in his sickness, and let patience have its perfect work in his soul. Raise him up to praise thy name, to pay those vows he makes in trouble before the assembly of thy saints, and to walk in newness of life. But if thou dost not see fit to spare thy servant, whom we are now remembering before thee, O prepare every one of this family, according to our several relations, for the awful stroke. With respect to himself, if the time of his departure draweth nigh, O let his heart be comforted by thy promises in Christ, and taste that thou art gracious unto him. May his soul be safe and happy in the hour of death; and, in the great day of the Lord Jesus Christ, may he be found among those who died in him.

And help us all, who are now in health, to improve this loud and solemn call to prepare for our own sickness and disease. Let us not abuse our bodily strength to encourage ourselves in sinful security and impenitence. Give us always to be ready, by performing the will of our Lord, that whensoever he shall come, we may be found of him in peace, and enter into his joy: that whenever our health is turned into sickness, and our strength into weakness, and our ease into sharp pain, we may not be cast down or perplexed, but feel in our souls those supports and consolations which the world cannot give, nor death itself take away.

Hear us, O Lord our God, in these our humble requests: forgive us our sins; and accept our persons and our service through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
*Amen.*

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A Family Thanksgiving for the Recovery of a sick Member thereof.

MOST gracious and holy, good and merciful God! we have heard, we have seen, we have experi-

enced thy love. Blessed, for ever blessed be thy name, that instead of being known to us by the judgments our sins have deserved, thou art manifested to us as a God willing to forgive all our iniquities. Thou hast delivered our eyes from tears, and our hearts from anguish. Thy servant, whom thou hast lately afflicted, is now a monument of thy sparing mercy. Thou hast chastened or corrected him (or her), but thou hast not delivered him over unto death. Thou, Lord, hast turned our mourning into joy, and our fears into songs of praise.

O may this thy servant, whom thou hast spared, love thee more, and walk more exactly before thee in the land of the living. We beseech thee, perfect all that concerns his recovery : and grant that this gracious interposition may properly affect both him and every one of us in this family. From henceforth may we all more entirely depend upon thee for the continuance and preservation of our dearest earthly comforts : may we consider them as thy free gifts. O Lord, and know that thou alone makest every earthly blessing be to us what it is. And give us grace so to use and enjoy all our temporal comforts, as those who know the fashion of this world passeth away. Grant we may learn, from this late affliction in our family to live more like persons who are soon to be separated by death, and to give all diligence to grow rich towards God, that we may be better prepared for a breach in our family whenever it shall come. And whomsoever of us, O God, thou shalt be pleased to call away first, may we be ready to obey the summons ; and, though parted for a season here, be joined again in heaven, and be all of us for ever with the Lord, and with one another.

That we may none of us fall short of so glorious an end, O grant us a clear knowledge of the excellency of our God, and a firmer dependence upon the

word of thy grace. Grant us a stronger love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and a greater resemblance of him; that each of us in our particular station may be zealous for God, full of mercy and justice towards men, and possess every temper whereby God can be glorified in us.

Fill our minds with a more cheerful and lively sense of our obligations to thee, especially for this late additional mercy: write it, we beseech thee, on our hearts, so that no temptation from without, or corruption from within, may make us ever act as if we forgot it.

And now, O Lord, we again present both ourselves and family, all we have and all we are, a lively sacrifice unto thee for all our remaining days. Be with us when we are passing through the valley of the shadow of death; may we then fear no evil, nor have cause to fear any. Guard us through the gloomy passage, and bring us safe to thine eternal kingdom and glory. We humbly ask all these blessings, though utterly unworthy ourselves of any notice, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who ever lives to make intercession for us. *Amen.*

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A Prayer for one convinced of Sin.

**GOD** be merciful to me a sinner: a sinner beyond expression! How shall I lift up mine eyes towards thee, O thou most holy, or take thy name within my polluted lips! O Lord, thou needest not my confession to inform thee, for thine eye hath been ever upon my path; and of the things that have come into my mind, thou hast known every one of them. The vanity of my childhood, the folly of my youth, the obstinacy and rebellion of my riper years, are all written in thy book. Alas! thou knowest I was conceived in sin, and have lived in sin ever since

I was born. All thy commandments have I broken, all thy mercies have I abused, trifled with thy patience, resisted thy Spirit, and rejected thy gospel, times without number.

So foolish and ignorant, so stupid and hardened, unthankful and unfaithful have I been; a transgressor from the womb: such has been my life. What then must my heart be, the foundation from whence all these stream of bitterness have flowed? O Lord, thou hast said it, and I cannot deny it, my heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. I am wholly defiled. There is no sound part in me. I am full of pride and ignorance, unbelief and self-will: my boasted strength is weakness, and my best righteousness as an unclean thing before thee. I owe thee ten thousand talents, but have nothing to pay. I am bound to a perfect obedience, but I cannot perform. O wretched man, who shall deliver me? Wherewithal shall I come before the most high God? Will sighs, or tears, or promises, answer the demands of thy law, satisfy thy justice, and avert thy righteous anger? or where shall I hide my guilty head? O Lord, my flesh trembleth, my heart faileth before thee. I am afraid of thy judgments; I have deserved them all; and shouldest thou now pour forth thy wrath upon me unto the uttermost, even in the midst of my sufferings I must own thy justice. Shouldest thou shut out my prayers, and say, Depart, thou cursed, into everlasting fire; I must be dumb. But, O Lord, though I have thus destroyed myself, is there no help, no hope in thee? Hast thou not revealed thyself in thy word as "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin?" and hast thou not commended thy love to poor lost sinners, in giving thine only Son to be the propitiation for sin? hath not thy kind

providence put thy gospel into my hands, to prevent my sinking into despair? Thou hast been pleased to inform me of the sinless life and meritorious death of thy only begotten Son, of the grace of his heart to the chief of sinners, and the intercession he ever lives to make for the worst that come to thee by him. And though it is amongst my most abominable sins, and the cause of them, that I so long slighted this record of thy Son, I now feel and see, that, except he saves me, I must undoubtedly perish for ever. All that believe in him he will save; and I am taught in thy word that faith is thy gift, and of thy operation in the soul. O bestow and work in me the work of faith with power, I beseech thee, unworthy as I am. Enable me to behold the suffering wounded Lamb of God, who poured forth his soul an offering for transgressors. Help me to believe that he has his own self bore my sins on his own body on the tree; that he has delivered me from the curse of the law, being made a curse for me. Let me feel the powerful efficacy of that blood which cleanseth from all sin. O let that Spirit, which Jesus is exalted to bestow, testify of him to me, and glorify him in my eyes, that my troubled conscience may enjoy peace, and my soul find rest in Christ. Gird me with strength for thy blessed service, and redeem me by thy mighty grace from the power of all iniquity, from the hands of all my enemies, that I may live devoted to thee for ever. O spare me, good Lord, that I may be a monument of the riches of thy mercy, and an instrument of spreading thy praise, who art just, and yet the Justifier of the sinner and the ungodly, through him whom thou hast held forth to be a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood.

*Amen.*

## A Prayer for the Increase of Faith in Christ.

ENLARGE, I beseech thee, O Lord my God, my narrow heart to receive thy precious promises in all their power and fulness. If the faint hope I already have, that thou art my reconciled Father, was not founded upon thy own faithful word, it would indeed be presumption to ask of thee to confirm it to a full assurance. But since thou hast given to them that believe exceeding great and precious promises, that they might be partakers of a divine nature; and, by thy immutable word and oath, hast provided that all who fly to Jesus Christ for refuge should have strong consolation, O give me to enjoy the inestimable benefit. Lord, I do believe, help thou mine unbelief. Adored be thy free grace, for what thou hast already done; but perfect thy work in me: make me strong in faith, that on all occasions I may give glory to God. Thou hast shewn me something of my own misery. I see, I feel myself a lost creature without thy salvation. Thou hast also given me some understanding to know him that is true, even the almighty Saviour; and every hope of mercy not founded upon him, I renounce. I have cast myself at his feet, and said, Lord, save me, or I perish. I cannot doubt his power; but O forgive me, that I so often doubt his love and willingness to save such as I am, though I know for this purpose he appeared in the form of a servant, and died upon the cross.

O let me know in whom I have believed, so as no more to doubt, nor be in darkness. Persuade me fully of my own sincerity in intrusting my dearest concerns into the hands of Christ, and of his willingness and ability to keep that which I have committed to him against the great day; to preserve me from falling, to support me under all my trials, to defend me against all my enemies through this state of war.

fare, and at length to present me faultless before thy glorious presence with exceeding joy.

Fain would I rely upon thy faithful promises ; fain would I rejoice in hope ; but, alas ! an evil heart of unbelief deprives me of those comforts and privileges provided in the gospel for returning sinners. Let the Sun of righteousness shine forth with healing in his beams, scattering the mists and clouds which hang upon my mind. Give me grace to seek this blessing by diligently reading thy holy word, by being instant in prayer, constant in the use of all ordinances, and circumspect in all my conversation. Let me not remain ignorant of the devices of Satan, that he may neither terrify me by his malicious suggestions, nor seduce me under the appearance of an angel of light, to depart one step from the rule of thy word, either to do what thou hast not commanded, or to expect what thou hast not promised. But having my heart, my hope, my eye fixed upon thee alone, may I cheerfully wait for the accomplishment of all the good, both in time and in eternity, promised to them that are in Christ Jesus. I ask this in his name. *Amen.*

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A Prayer proper for one in Trade or Merchandise.

**RIGHTEOUS** art thou, O God, in the doom pronounced on all the human race for the offence of our first parents, that in the sweat of our brow we should eat bread. And not only in justice, but in mercy hast thou ordained that we should be active and laborious, to be of benefit to others, and to be preserved ourselves from all the evils of idleness and sloth. Thou thyself workest hitherto, and thy providence, which ordereth all things in heaven and earth, doth never slumber or sleep. Thy only begotten Son also, when he took upon him our flesh,

put his hand to the nail, and his right hand to the workman's hammer; and it was his meat and drink to do thy will, and finish the work thou gavest him to do. Thy holy angels likewise are in action without ceasing, ministering unto them that shall be heirs of salvation. Who, or what then am I, O Lord God, that I should expect to have no business or labour appointed for me, requiring my close attention? Let not this be esteemed a burden, but give me grace with all alacrity to apply myself to my particular employment. And as I am fixed in it by thy unerring wisdom, not for my own private interest alone, but for the good of society, O implant and increase within me a principle of truth, honesty, and good-will to men, that I may always abhor the thought of enriching myself by the gains of secret fraud or base deception. Keep me from day to day by thy mighty power in a conscientious regard to that rule of thine, designed to extirpate all the diseases of trade, of doing unto others as I would they should do unto me. Let me never forget that the wages of righteousness bring with them the curse of God, and that the prosperity of the wicked shall destroy them. Let me always feel, that better is a little which the righteous hath, than great revenues without right. And as thou knowest how naturally selfish I am, and how prone to the love of money, which is the root of all evil; as thou seest, in the daily course of my business and employment, how much I am in danger of being led to think gain the one thing needful, O my God, save me from all such snares and temptations. Let not riches with its enchantments destroy me, nor honours or pleasures entice me. O let me ever see them the fleeting vanities they are, and anticipate the day when they cannot profit at all. Rivet, O my God, upon my mind the intrinsic everlasting value of thy love, and

of the comforts of thy Spirit, and a remembrance of the happy and ever-blessed state of the obedient and faithful in Christ Jesus ; that so, amidst all my getting, I may get that treasure that shall never fail. And, in order that the business I have to do in the world may not prove the destruction of my soul, grant me a godly jealousy over it, and a perpetual suspicion of its tendency to extinguish in me all sense of spiritual blessings, and to alienate my heart from God. Knowing how many thousands have been swallowed up and lost in the inordinate pursuit of their business ; seeing the world intent only upon amassing wealth ; and feeling the same passion kindling within my own corrupted heart ; I earnestly beseech thee, O God, by thy own bowels of mercies, by thy dear Son's blood, put thy Spirit within me, causing me to use this world as not abusing it, and to manifest my moderation in the midst of my diligent application to my calling. And never suffer me, in judgment for my sins, to be so immersed in trade and merchandise, as to make me cold and formal in prayer, backward to holy duties, a stranger to the peace and joys of the faithful, a profaner of thy sabbath, or a despiser of those opportunities for secret devotion, by which alone my soul can be kept alive to God, and grace obtained to withstand sin. Make me a conqueror over the world, and, by this infallible witness in myself, to prove that I believe in Christ to the saving of my soul. If riches increase with me, grant in the same proportion my hand may be liberal to the poor and needy. Possess my mind, wherever I am, whatever I do, with the sense of thy presence, as a God that searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, that thou mayest give to every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings ; that so I may never be surprised in the hurry of business, or seduced by a notion of

concealing the fraud, to act with deceit and lies. Lord, hear my prayer, and keep me, so that neither the cares nor the pleasures of this world, nor the deceitfulness of riches, nor the lusting after other things, may ever prevail against me, to make me a dishonour to my Christian profession, and to sell my soul for that which perishes in the using. Hear me, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake, who died to deliver us from the power of this present evil world, and to choose unto himself a peculiar people, who should not be of the spirit and temper of this world, even as he was not of the world. To him, with thyself, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

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A Prayer proper for a Person in Trade upon sustaining some great Loss.

O LORD, thou makest rich and thou makest poor, exercising an absolute and most righteous sovereignty over the substance and circumstances, as well as over the persons of thy creatures. O forgive my sins, which have provoked thy displeasure. Have compassion upon my weakness, and turn back the swarm of evil thoughts which are pressing in from every side. Banish all gloomy distrustful apprehensions from my mind. Teach me how to be abased; and if it seem good in thy sight to call me to such a severe trial, how to be in want. Give me understanding to learn more effectually from this providence, how transient and uncertain are the riches of this world! and now, more than ever it has been, let it be my chief aim to grow rich towards God, to lay up my treasure there where it can never be lost, and to choose that good part which shall never be taken from me. O Lord, preserve me from desponding thoughts, though this great misfortune is

come upon me. Suffer me not, through any apprehensions of my afflicted mind, so to limit thy power, as if thou couldst not extricate me out of all my present difficulties, in a way which I cannot foresee; or as if thy bounty was not able to supply me, because the means of my provision at this time are now taken from me. In opposition to my own self-tormenting thoughts, and to the malice of Satan, who waits to turn them to my ruin, convince me by thy Spirit, that if I lead a godly life, I shall want no manner of thing that is good. Thou art able to retrieve all my loss; and after thou hast proved and tried my heart, to bless my last days with more abundance than my first: or thou canst give me more satisfaction and peace in a reduced condition, than I enjoyed in greater affluence. O let these tho'ts quiet my mind, and make me cheerfully submit to thy disposal. Let thy faithfulness, truth, and promise be my heritage, and trusted in as a sufficient portion. And as thou, O God, knowest my frame, and all the finest springs of my nature, let not the sight of my children or family overpower me. Let not my heart be torn with anguish, as if they must be destitute and forsaken. Say unto me, Be of good cheer, leave your children unto me, I will preserve them alive, and put thou thy trust in the Lord. O let my faith rest upon thy word, that thou, who hast graciously given them life, wilt provide proper sustenance for it. Prepare me, I beseech thee, O God, for whatever further trials I shall be called to go through, and make me ready even to lose my life, rather than to take any unlawful methods for relief in my distress. Thus, O Lord, desiring to esteem my present affliction a mark of thy favour towards me (though my corrupt nature is apt to be offended with it), I commend myself and my imperfect petitions unto thee, through thy beloved Son. *Amen.*

Prayer for a Student educating for Holy Orders.

O THOU Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift; by whose goodness to me I am training up in knowledge and learning, that I may be thoroughly furnished in due time to be a preacher and teacher in thy church; to thee I make my prayer for a blessing upon my studies and undertaking, or all will be in vain. Sanctify and purify, I beseech thee, my heart, that I may not study for reputation, and to get the name of learned and acute, but only to be an instrument in thy hand of glory to thy name, of good to the immortal souls of men. And as authors are infinite, as much reading is a weariness to the flesh causing distraction, and tending only to unprofitable questions; for this reason, I beseech thee, so to direct me, that I may know what books to choose and what to refuse, and constantly apply myself to that course of studies which will best prepare me for thy holy service. Preserve me from the infection of false doctrine, naturally pleasing to the pride and corruption of nature; and, as the only way of being safe from falling into error, grant I may give myself up entirely to be guided by thy Spirit in daily and earnest prayer. And as thy written word is the only repository of thy will, and of that wisdom which is far better than gold, O make me a diligent reader of the scripture. May I exercise myself in it day and night. Let it dwell richly in me, and be as much more pleasant to my soul than all human writings, as thou, O God, art wiser and better than men. Give me wisdom to associate with none but those by whose sobriety, gravity, and good example, I may receive benefit. Rather let me choose solitude, and be satisfied with reproach, than walk in the way of sinners, and for company's sake, destroy my soul, or wound my conscience. Excite in me a constant apprehension of my amusements and recreations, knowing how difficult it is

not to exceed the bounds of moderation, and how soon the affections are drawn off from better things, and enslaved. Let my care therefore be to redeem my time, and to find my study and my God my exceeding joy. In all things do thou order my conversation. Grant I may be temperate in meat, and drink, and sleep; grave in my deportment; respectful to my superiors; amiable to my equals; meek towards my inferiors; courteous and affable, without levity and folly, to all. Give me ability and aptness for scholastic exercises, which are to strengthen my faculties, to polish the mind, and to be the ornament of my future life; that so I may leave this place of education free from the vices too prevalent in it, sanctified and prepared as a vessel of honour fit for the master's use. And may I take upon me the high office of a teacher of souls, not as one who prostitutes his conscience, and lies unto the Holy Ghost for a morsel of bread, but as one who is really moved by a desire of saving perishing sinners. Hear me for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

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A Prayer for Chastity.

O THOU God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast called us, not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness, whose will is our sanctification, that we should possess our bodies in honour and chastity, not in the lusts of concupiscence, as the Gentiles who knew not God: I bow down my knees to bewail before thee the inherent corruption of my nature, my desire to defile myself in those things which I know in common with the brute beasts. To such a degree hath this lust of uncleanness seized me, that with difficulty I abstain from actual lewdness, whilst my imagination is dreadfully stained, and the thoughts and desires of my heart miserably subjected to this fierce passion. O my most gracious God, had it not been for thy restraining grace

I had doubtless fallen a prey to this common sin. Do thou therefore, who hast kept me from falling, vanquish all the uncleanness of my heart. Fortify me against it, and fill me with a detestation of lewdness as a deadly evil. And as the wickedness of my heart would seduce me into this sin by promising repentance and amendment, cause me to understand that the sin of whoredom, above all others, takes away the understanding, leading on those who are enslaved by it like an ox that goeth to the slaughter, or a fool to the correction of the stocks. Convince me of thy utter abhorrence of this sin, and the impossibility of escaping thy displeasure, if I take part in the voluptuousness of the unclean. Make me remember thy judgments in old time upon those who committed fornication, and all the express declarations of thy own word, that whoremongers and adulterers shall have their portion in the lake of brimstone and fire. Let not vain words deceive me, nor the practice of the ungodly lessen in my sight the iniquity of this sin; nor the vast multitude of those who live in it make me once doubt thy veracity, and determinate purpose to destroy the unclean, both body and soul, in hell. That I may not myself be overtaken by this lust, let me avoid all society and acquaintance with the debauched, and all their haunts of idleness and places of entertainment. Into their assembly never let me enter. Give me to apply myself with industry to my business, knowing that idleness is the great encourager of unclean desires and practices. Enable me to turn away my eyes from every inflaming object; to be sober and careful in my discourse, not giving way myself to foolish talking or jesting, nor staying to hear those who do. Give me grace to eat for strength, not for pampering the flesh. Lord, make me to heed and beware of cherishing the feeblest motion of this lust, knowing from the history of God's saints how great a fire such a little

spark has kindled when indulged. As I profess myself a Christian, grant I may with horror reject every temptation of offering such an insult to my Redeemer, as to take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot. And lest my heart should envy sinners in their pleasures, O Lord, grant I may reflect on all those marks of thy vengeance against the sin of lewdness visible in this world, as well as reserved for the unclean in that which is eternal. Let me not forget what loathsome diseases, what bitter pains, what poverty and want is the fruit of lust; what quarrels, what bloodshed, what infamy and death from the hands of justice are brought upon young wretches by means of chambering and wantonness. Let the knowledge of these things make me urgent and instant, day after day, to cry unto thee to preserve me blameless in spirit, soul and body, and that I may never gratify an appetite implanted for the noblest purposes, but in the way which thou hast appointed. Grant this, holy Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

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A Prayer for a young Person.

WHITHER. O Lord, shall a young man go, or how shall he be able to escape all the snares which beset him, and all the corruptions within his own heart ever ready to betray him? Where, but to thy throne of grace, O God of all power? Here, therefore, do I present my supplication, humbly beseeching thee to give unto me that faith in thy word, which shall make me receive all thy promises with delight and comfort, and stand in awe of doing any thing to incur thy threatenings. Establish in me the fear of thy eternal majesty, and a steadfast purpose of heart to walk before thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life. Subdue my natural pride, which would lead me to be a rebel against thee, O my God, and lightly to regard the plainest and

most positive of thy commands. Quench those lusts which the fire of youth ever kindles in the heart. Instead of being heady, high-minded, rash, and presumptuous, open mine ear to receive instruction : inspire me with meekness to be humble in my whole behaviour, and ever to follow that which is good. Create in me a constant distrust of myself, an aversion to the company of the lewd, the gay, and thoughtless, and a jealousy of those things to which I find myself most vehemently inclined ; knowing that by nature I am altogether earthly, sensual, and devilish. Now in my youth, grant I may ascribe unto thee the honour due unto thy name, by preferring always the knowledge of thy truth, the sense of thy love, and observance of thy will, to all the pleasures of sin and vanity. O convince me that the beginning of sin, as well as of strife, is as when one letteth out water. Teach me how soon sin will ensnare, how insensibly entangle, and how difficult it is to escape from those evil tempers and indulgences, when once complied with, which might easily be vanquished by resistance at first. Let thy Spirit be my perpetual monitor, guide, and comforter, through thy word. Root out of my vain heart all good opinion of myself, all haughtiness of spirit, all stubbornness and moroseness of disposition, all affectation of conforming to fashionable sin and folly, and every wanton imagination ; these vile propensities, the miserable diseases of my fallen nature, which I find within me. Help me, O my God, to mortify them all, to advance in grace as I grow in years, to gain a complete victory over my corruptions, and make a constant progress in the knowledge, faith, and consolations of Jesus Christ the Lord ; in whose early youth I see an example of holiness and righteousness, which I am commanded to follow ; and through whom I hope to be accepted unto life for evermore. *Amen.*

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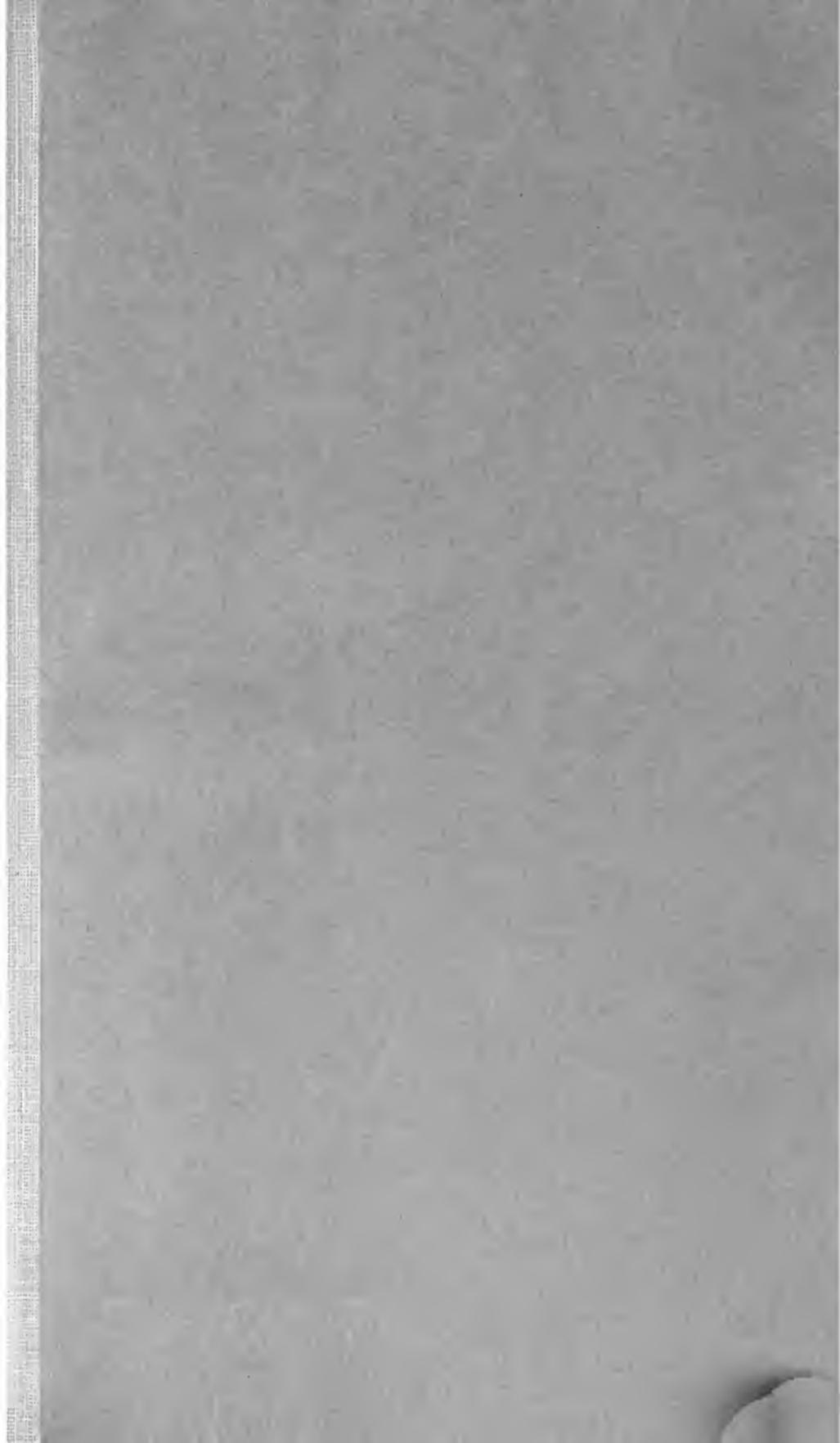
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