

you will find it is such as Job, and Asaph, and Heman, that make most doleful complaints of the hidings of God's face. Therefore take the apostle's counsel: "Art thou called, being a servant? care not for it." (1 Cor. vii. 21.) As though he had said, Be not troubled at it, as if thy mean condition in the world rendered thee less acceptable unto God. Poor Lazarus is in rich Abraham's bosom. "Hearken, my beloved brethren:" as if he had said, This is a matter worthy your special notice: "Hath not God chosen" (As if he had said, Dare ye deny it?) "the poor of this world," that is, in the things of this world, or in the esteem of this world, "rich in faith?" (James ii. 5;) that is, they have abundance of the grace of faith, and of the privileges of faith; they have no inheritance on earth, but they have at present a title to, and they shall soon have the possession of, the heavenly kingdom.

SERMON II.

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WHEREIN, AND WHEREFORE, THE DAMNATION OF THOSE THAT PERISH UNDER THE GOSPEL WILL BE MORE INTOLERABLE THAN THE DAMNATION OF SODOM, OR THE WORST OF THE HEATHENS, AT THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.—Matthew xi. 24.

THE case [which] I am to discourse of this morning, is this: *Wherein, and wherefore, the damnation of those that perish under the gospel will be more intolerable than the damnation of Sodom, or the worst of the Heathens, at the day of judgment.*

We read, in the foregoing chapter, [of] our Saviour giving commission to his twelve disciples, whom he called "apostles;" where we have their commission asserted, instructions about it, and encouragements to the discharge of it.

But by his commission given to them, he did not thereby excuse himself; by his sending them forth to preach and work miracles, he did not forbear and indulge himself: others' labours did not excuse his own. For we read in the first verse of this chapter, "When Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities." And some of the cities are these, mentioned in this chapter,—Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum; three cities in Galilee. And he begins his speech to them in a way of exprobration: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done." (Verse 20.) Whence

we may note, that this was not the first time of his coming to these cities: he had been with them before, both teaching and working miracles; else how could he now upbraid them? And, also, that these were not the only cities where he had thus been present; but here, the text saith, "were wrought," *αι ωλεισται δυναμεις αυτου*, "most of his mighty works."

And he begins with Chorazin and Bethsaida, and puts them both together, either because they were near one another,—about two miles distant; or because they both had equal privileges of his presence with them, and so [were] equally under guilt.

And in his upbraiding them, we may consider,

1. *What he upbraids them for.*—That "they repented not," notwithstanding the mighty works they had seen done before their eyes, and the heavenly doctrine they had heard preached in their ears.

2. *Whom he upbraids them by.*—It is Tyre and Sidon, the Tyrians and Sidonians; who were Phenicians inhabiting Syria, none of the Jewish nation, out of the pale of the church, brought up in the ignorance of God and true religion; yet if the works done in these cities had been done among them, they would have repented, and repented in dust and ashes, when these cities repented not at all: whereupon, our Saviour denounceth a woe against them: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida!"

3. *He upbraids them by name.*—And not in general with other impenitent sinners; for particulars affect more than generals.

Next he proceeds to Capernaum; and because, it may be, this city was under greater guilt than the two former, or any other in Galilee, therefore Christ names it by itself, and doth not only name it, but notify it,

1. *As being lifted up to heaven.*—Not in outward grandeur, pomp, or power; but by signal favours and privileges, from Christ's presence, his preaching, and mighty works done in it.

2. *As a city to be cast down to hell.*—"Thou shalt be cast down to hell;" or "hurled down by force and violence," as the Greek word, *καταβιβασθησθαι*, imports; and "to hell," *τωσ αιδου*, or, "as low as hell." A great fall indeed! What so high as heaven? and what so low as hell? Though, by "hell" some understand a temporal destruction,—some fatal calamity, that should carry it to the grave of oblivion, and bury it in ashes out of sight: which was executed upon it by the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and then by the Romans. But seeing Christ speaks in the text of "the day of judgment," I suppose he rather speaks of the eternal hell and damnation [which] it should be hurled then into.

3. He notifies it *by the form of his speech, directed to it in a way of indignation.*—"And thou, Capernaum." As if he held up his hand, shook his head, and contracted his brow against it: "Ah! Capernaum, Capernaum, of all cities, thou art likely to have the severest doom."

4. And, again, *by comparing it with Sodom, and representing it as worse than Sodom.*—"If the mighty works, which have been done in

thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." Sodom would have repented; or had so many righteous persons in it, whereby not to be destroyed with fire and brimstone.

Now, as all these three cities were in Galilee, so they belonged to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali; which are foretold by the prophet Isaiah, as such as would first fall into the dimness and darkness of affliction in the Assyrian captivities, and as such as should first have the gospel-light shining amongst them in Christ's public ministry: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined;" (Isai. ix, 1, 2;) and therefore are first upbraided and rebuked by our Saviour, because they repented not.

But I pass from the context to the text; wherein we have our Saviour looking to the day of judgment, and the rewards of sinners to be then distributed: "But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee."

Which words he speaks to Capernaum, and are a prediction of its doom in the day of judgment. And we might take up several NOTES from them:—

NOTE I. *There shall be a day of judgment.*—Whether men will believe it or not, yet it shall be. Christ here saith it, and the righteousness of God makes it necessary. It hath a witness in every man's conscience: "Felix trembled," though a Heathen, when Paul discoursed of it. (Acts xxiv. 25.) It is one of the articles of the Creed, and one of "the principles" of the Christian religion, in Heb. vi. 2, called "eternal judgment." But I shall not insist on this.

NOTE II. *In the day of judgment some sinners shall fare worse than others.*—Of those that shall be condemned, some will fall under sorer condemnation. Of those that go into everlasting fire, some, as in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, shall be cast into hotter flames; and [of] those that are "cast into outer darkness," (Matt. viii. 12,) yet for some "is reserved the blackness of darkness." (Jude 13.) When our Saviour tells us of some that are made two times more the children of hell than others, (Matt. xxiii. 15,) and of some that shall be beaten with few stripes, and others with many stripes, (Luke xii. 47, 48,) it shows there are degrees of punishment in the state of damnation. Some have questioned whether there will be degrees of glory to the saints in heaven: but [there are] none but believe there will be degrees of torment in hell; some more, some less, tolerable. But neither this shall I insist upon.

NOTE III. *In the day of judgment there will be a distribution of sinners' punishments according to the exact rules of justice.*—Why else shall it be more tolerable for some sinners than others? As grace and mercy will distribute the rewards to the saints, so justice [will distribute] punishment to the wicked. So that nothing will be added above what is due, and nothing abated of what is due; not one stripe inflicted [beyond], nor one diminished of, what justice shall determine. "By his actions are weighed," saith Hannah in her song. (1 Sam. ii. 3.) Bad actions, as well as good; and the

sinfulness of them [is] known to a grain : and the heavier sin shall have the heavier judgment. Neither this do I insist upon.

NOTE IV. *Christ's saying is sufficient ground for our believing.*—“But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable,” &c. He adds no more by way of proof ; his saying it, is enough. How often do we find in the gospel these words!—“Verily I say unto you ;” and sometimes, “Verily, verily, I say unto you ;” or, “Amen, Amen :” and [he] is himself called “the Amen.” (Rev. iii. 14.) We owe this deference to him, as to believe him upon his naked word. If an *ipse dixit* passed for a proof in Pythagoras's school, much more should it in Christ's. Neither will I insist on this.

NOTE V. *In the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Sodom than Capernaum.*—And this will lead me to discourse of these two cities literally, and from thence to speak of the case proposed more at large and generally.

These two cities may be considered under a threefold distinction :—

1. *Nominal.*—The one is called *Sodom* ; in the Hebrew, *Sedom*, or *Sedomah*. Sometimes we read of “the land of Sodom,” or “the Sodomites ;” and then it comprehends Gomorrah, which is often mentioned with it ; as, Isai. i. 9 ; Matt. x. 15, &c. And Admah and Zeboim and Bela, also, may be meant by “the land of Sodom,” and “the cities of the plain.” (Gen. xix. 25.) And the other city is called *Capernaum* ; which signifies in Hebrew, “a field of consolation,” or “a pleasant field :” as Sodom hath its name from a word that denotes “secrecy,” or *cætus consultantium* [“a council”]. (Gen. xlix. 6.) But I shall not criticize upon names.

2. *Local.*—Sodom was on the east of Canaan, in the plain of Jordan ;—which Lot chose at his parting from Abraham ; and he is said to journey to the east ; (Gen. xiii. 11 ;)—and was a pleasant and fruitful plain, and “as the garden of the Lord,” till it was destroyed from heaven. (Verse 10.) But Capernaum was on the north or north-west of the land of Judah.

3. *Moral.*—Both were sinful cities, but their sins of a distinct kind. The sins of Sodom were sins against the law more directly, and against the light of nature, and of the highest scandal ; but Capernaum's sins were more against the new light of the gospel, breaking forth upon them from Christ's ministry, and the mighty works whereby his doctrine was confirmed among them.

Now Christ, considering both these cities, and the sin of both, gives the decision in the text : “That it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, than for Capernaum, in the day of judgment.”

And may not this seem strange and amazing ? Sodom was a city that was wicked to a prodigy and to a proverb. It is said, that “the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly ;” (Gen. xiii. 13 ;) and impudency in sin is called a “declaring their sin like Sodom.” (Isai. iii. 9.) And, “They are all of them unto me as Sodom,” saith God, speaking of the sin of the Jews ; (Jer. xxiii. 14 ;) and wicked rulers are called “rulers of Sodom.” (Isai. i. 10.) Whereupon Lot is said to “vex his righteous soul with their unlawful

deeds." (2 Peter ii. 8.) And there is a sin, not fit to be mentioned, called by the name of "sodomy," so denominated from the place. Yet, notwithstanding all this, it will be more tolerable for Sodom than Capernaum in the day of judgment. Capernaum was "lifted up to heaven" by many favours and privileges, which were not vouchsafed to Sodom; had means of knowing the Saviour of the world, and the way of salvation, above what Sodom had; had Christ himself, the Son of God, present, preaching, and doing many wonderful works in it, which Sodom never had. Many things are recorded in the evangelists about this Capernaum, and its privileges above most cities. It is said, that Christ "dwelt" here. (Matt. iv. 13.) Here he healed the centurion's servant by a word from his mouth; (Matt. viii. 5—13;) here he healed Peter's wife's mother, and many that were sick and possessed of devils; (verses 14—16;) and here he healed the paralytic man let down through the tiles of the house; (Mark ii. 1—12;) and here he cast out the unclean spirit by a rebuke from his mouth. (Mark i. 21—27.) Here he wrought the miracle of the tribute-money taken out of the mouth of a fish; (Matt. xvii. 24—27;) here he entered the synagogue, and taught once and again, [so] that "they were astonished at his doctrine;" (Mark i. 22;) and here he preached that divine and mysterious sermon about the bread of life which came down from heaven, and eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man. (John vi. 59.) And this city was so famous for Christ's miracles, that when he came to Nazareth, they expected him to do the works there which he had "done in Capernaum." (Luke iv. 23.) Now when, after all this, Capernaum did not receive him nor his doctrine, but "murmured at" both, (John vi. 41,) and turned not to God by true repentance, this was the sin of that city, which will make it more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment, than for it.

But that I might bring my discourse home and closer to ourselves and to the case proposed, we shall consider these two cities as types and examples of two sorts of sinners; for so it may be supposed our Saviour intended them:—*Sodom*, as a type of the Heathen, and all that wickedness found among them, who have not heard of Christ and salvation by him; and *Capernaum*, a type of those sinners who live under the gospel, and have had Christ preached to them, and present among them by his word and ordinances. And so I come to the last note, which will fully answer to the case proposed.

NOTE VI. *That the worst of the Heathen, who never had Christ preached to them, and salvation offered by him, shall fare better in the day of judgment, than those that continue impenitent under the gospel.*—A tremendous doctrine.

Sodom is here instanced-in by our Saviour, as being the most notorious sinners among all the Heathens, worse than Tyre and Sidon before mentioned, or any heathen city; and yet [they] shall fare better than Capernaum, though none of Sodom's sins be charged by our Saviour upon it. But they repented not under the means of

grace and salvation: "Because they repented not," saith the text: this was their sin.

QUESTION. "But what is this impenitency under the gospel?"

ANSWER 1. It is not all hardness of heart that is impenitency; many good Christians may still find something of it: but it is when men harden their own hearts; (Heb. iii. 8;) which are two different things.

2. It is not any particular act of sin that may be called "impenitency," but a trade and course of sin.

3. It implies a wilful rejecting [of] the offers of grace and salvation by Christ, in those that live under the gospel.

4. It implies a slighting and contempt of the threatenings denounced against sin and sinners.

5. It implies a resolved purpose to persist in sin, though man knows it to be sin. When the sinner's mind is not changed, nor he comes to himself, and to "grow wise after" all his folly; (as the Greek word for "repentance," *μετανοια*, doth import;) this is impenitency.

This I premise, to clear my way to the following discourse; as also by answering the following objection.

OBJECTION. "But Capernaum's case is not ours. Capernaum saw Christ in the flesh, which we never did; they heard doctrine preached from his own mouth, which we never did; they saw his miracles wrought before their eyes, which we never saw. Had we had their advantages and privileges, we would not have done as they did, nor been impenitent as they were."

ANSWER. This evasion is much like that of the scribes and Pharisees, mentioned Matt. xxiii. 30: "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets;" when they at the same time were filled with that malice against Christ, which issued in the shedding of his precious blood. But I answer,

1. Though we have not Christ with us in his fleshly presence, yet we have his doctrine still with us, and preached to us. And it was not his fleshly presence that brought any sinners to repentance, but his doctrine.

2. Though we see not Christ's miracles wrought before our eyes, yet we have them recorded by the four evangelists, and by such as were either eye-witnesses, or wrote by an infallible Spirit, or rather both. And if we believe the gospel, we believe what is there recorded; and "faith is the evidence of things not seen," (Heb. xi. 1,) and will make their impression upon the heart, as if seen with the eye.

3. Of those many thousands both of Jews and Gentiles that were brought to repentance by the gospel in the primitive times, not one of a hundred or of a thousand did either see Christ in the flesh, heard him preach, or saw him work any miracle.

4. Of those many thousands that did see him and his works, and hear him preach, when he was upon earth, not one of a hundred

were brought to repentance thereby. (See John xii. 37.) And are any sure in these days, [that,] had they then lived, they should not have been of that number? considering that men have now the same blindness and hardness upon their minds and hearts which they had then, and the same love to their sins and prejudices against holiness as were then. And therefore impenitency now will expose a man to as severe punishment, and present him as guilty before God at the day of judgment, as it will Capernaum. And doth not our Saviour denounce the same severities against them that received not his disciples' preaching, as [against those who received not] his own? "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words," having offered peace to them, "depart out of that house or city, and shake off the dust of your feet" against them. "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city." (Matt. x. 14, 15.) And this holds true in every age, and in the present age; in every city, and in this city; in every nation, and in our own nation.

DOCTRINE.

Thus having made my way clear, I now proceed; and show, that *impenitency under the gospel will expose men to the most intolerable judgment in the day of Christ.*

I. *I shall prove that it will do so.*

II. *Why it will do so.*

III. *Wherein will this greater intolerableness consist?*

I. *That it will do so.*—I need not prove it by any other argument, than what we have in the text. "I say unto you," saith our Saviour; and again, "I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable," &c. (Verse 22.) And he adds his "amen" and "verily" to it: "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment," &c. (Matt. x. 15.) If we believe not that Christ hath said this, we are infidels to the gospel: if we think he hath said false, we are guilty of blasphemy. Is it not *he* that saith, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," (Matt. xxiv. 35,) *that* saith this? Is it not *he* who is styled "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness," (Rev. iii. 14,) *that* hath said this? Is it not *he* who came down from heaven, out of the bosom of God, and spake nothing but what he had seen and heard from his Father, *that* saith this? And therefore it may seem some reflection upon Christ's veracity, and my auditors' infidelity and incredulity, to bring any other proof.

II. Next: *Why will it be so at the day of judgment?*

ANSWER. Because impenitency under the gospel hath more of sin in it, than any sin of the Heathen. And this is the general reason.

And where there is most sin, there will be the severest judgment. I suppose, none of you think, as some philosophers of old, that all sins are equal: and inequality of sin requires in justice inequality in punishment. That saying of Christ to Pilate shows that there are degrees of sin: "He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater

sin :” (John xix. 11 :) and so, we may conclude, there will be degrees of punishment.

And these degrees of sin must needs be known to God, who is a God of knowledge ; and, being known to him, his justice requires of him punishment in a proportion ; though not in this life, yet at “ the day of revelation of the righteous judgment of God ;” (Rom. ii. 5 ;) when all men shall be put into the scale, as Daniel told Belshazzar, (Dan. v. 27,) and judgment passed upon them according to what weight they bear ; and their actions also considered and weighed in all their circumstances,—what grace and holiness may be found in the actions of some, and what sin in the actions of others. So that many sins that may pass for no sins now, may be found sinful then ; and such as pass for small sins and of little scandal before men now, may be found highly sinful in that day.

There are many sins that have more scandal than impenitency under the gospel, and yet not so much guilt. As we use to say in divinity, that some sins are *majoris reatús*, but *minoris scandali* ;* so it is here : the sins of Sodom had more scandal, but the sins of Capernaum greater guilt.

QUESTION. “ But wherein lies the sinfulness of impenitency under the gospel above other sin ?”

ANSWER 1. *Such will be left without excuse above all others.*—If the Heathen are said to be “ without excuse,” (Rom. i. 20,) not living and worshipping God according to the dictates of natural light, and the notices of God suggested by the works of creation ; if the Jews will have their “ mouth stopped,” having the written law of God and the knowledge of God’s will therein, and yet transgressing this law ; (as the apostle speaks, Rom. iii. 19 ;) much more will those who live impenitently under the gospel be without excuse, and have their mouths stopped, in the day of judgment. “ If I had not come and spoken unto them,” saith Christ, “ they had not had sin : but now they have no cloak for their sin.” (John xv. 22.) The gospel strips sinners of every cloak, and so exposeth them more naked to the severe justice of God : for “ this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light,” (John iii. 19,) and so are “ without excuse.”

(1.) Such cannot plead, as the Heathen may, that they were ignorant of a Saviour, and how to be saved by him from their sin.

(2.) Neither can they plead, that salvation by him was revealed so darkly, that they could not have any distinct knowledge of it ; as the Jew may plead.

(3.) Neither can they plead, that this revelation was never confirmed from heaven, so that they might certainly believe it to be from heaven, and not the invention of men. The confirmation of it is now made evident.

(4.) Neither can they plead, that they knew not that unbelief and impenitency were damnable sins, and would expose men to the judgment and wrath of God.

* “ Of greater guilt, but of less scandal.”—EDIT.

(5.) Neither can they plead ignorance of God's punitive justice : the sufferings of Christ for sin, to satisfy offended justice, do clearly evidence this to all that know any thing of the gospel ; and this more fully than any judgments [which] God hath inflicted upon sinners in this world, even Sodom itself.

(6.) Neither can they plead ignorance of a future state ; of the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and judgment to come, and heaven and hell. Though the Heathen had but dark notions, the wisest of them, about these things ; yet now "life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel," (2 Tim. i. 10,) and a future state is more clearly revealed than before either to Jew or Gentile.

(7.) Neither can they plead ignorance of God's pardoning mercy, and his readiness to pardon upon repentance ; whereby sinners may be hardened in their sin, as being without all hope. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared," saith the Psalmist. (Psalm cxxx. 4.) And, "Knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance," saith the apostle. (Rom. ii. 4.) And, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. v. 19.) His pardoning mercy is now clearly revealed, which is the great motive to repentance.

OBJECTION. "But then, to be ignorant, will be a man's advantage, and will furnish him with an excuse."

ANSWER. That ignorance which is invincible, will excuse ; but not slothful and affected ignorance. If a king hath published and proclaimed his law, a man's ignorance will not excuse him from the penalty. And to shut out the light, is as sinful as to sin against it. When "the light shineth in darkness," it will be no excuse, if "the darkness comprehend it not." (John i. 5.)

2. *Impenitency under the gospel is a resisting the loudest calls of God to repentance.*—The Heathen were called to repentance by the light of natural conscience, and the works of creation and providence ; the Jews were called by the law [which] God gave them, and the prophets [whom] God sent among them : but now, under the gospel, the call is louder than before. When the gospel was entering the world in John Baptist's ministry, it entered thus : "Repent ye : for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. iii. 2.) And under Christ's own ministry the call was louder : "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand : repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark i. 15.) And under the apostles' ministry the call went into all the world : "The times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts xvii. 30.) And still the great work of the ministry is that which our Saviour speaks of his [ministry], and the end of his coming : "Not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Matt. ix. 13.) And what the apostle Paul speaks of his ministry in Asia : "Testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ ;" (Acts xx. 21 ;) this is the great work of the ministry now. And higher motives are laid before sinners to repent under the gospel, than ever before.

3. *There is the highest contempt of God in it.*—He called by his prophets to repentance before ; but now he hath called by his own Son. If a king sends his own son to command rebels to lay down their arms and accept of terms of mercy, and they still refuse, it is greater contempt than if he had sent his servants ; as the king in the parable said, “Surely they will reverence my son,” (Matt. xxi. 37,) though they misused and killed his servants.

There hath been contempt of God by sinners in every age ; as the Psalmist complains : “Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God ?” (Psalm x. 13.) But this contempt riseth to a higher degree under the gospel, since Christ came into the world.

(1.) *A higher contempt of God’s authority.*—To transgress the law of God, delivered by angels upon the mount to Moses, and by Moses to the people, was a contempt of God’s authority, and “received a just recompence of reward.” (Heb. ii. 2.) How [much] greater contempt is it to disobey the gospel, which was preached by the Lord himself ! as the apostle there argues. (Verse 3.) To “refuse him that spake from heaven,” is greater contempt of God’s authority, than to “refuse him that spake on earth.” (Chap. xii. 25.)

Rejecting the gospel,—Christ calls it a “despising” both [of] him and his Father. (Luke x. 16.) And the law was delivered in the hand of Christ to men, when he came into the world ; so that now disobedience to it is a higher contempt both of the law and Lawgiver, than before. “If I had not come and spoken unto them,” saith Christ, “they had not had sin.” (John xv. 22.) The authority of the Speaker makes the contempt the greater.

(2.) *A higher contempt of God’s goodness.*—For the goodness of God is now revealed in the gospel more fully and clearly than before. Every impenitent sinner under the gospel puts a contempt upon the highest revelation of God’s goodness ; and that “goodness” that should “lead him to repentance,” is now rejected and “despised.” (Rom. ii. 4.) And nothing doth aggravate sin more, than when committed against special love, grace, kindness, and goodness. To turn grace into wantonness, is great abuse ; but to put it under contempt, is abominable. Man can better bear to have his power or authority or wisdom contemned, than his goodness. Ingratitude is justly reputed among the worst of vices ; and the contempt of goodness is the highest act of ingratitude ; and the higher the goodness is that is contemned, the higher still is the ingratitude, and the more provoking.

(3.) *A higher contempt of God’s threatenings.*—God’s threatenings under the law were, for the most part, of temporal evils ; but now, under the gospel, the threats rise higher, and are more dreadful. It is “the damnation of hell,” “everlasting fire,” “outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth ;” “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,” &c. (2 Thess. i. 9.) And great men cannot well bear to have their anger slighted, and their threats despised or derided.

But though the lion roar, and God’s threats are denounced, and his

wrath revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men, more than ever before ; yet the impenitent sinner trembles not, but goes on in his sin, and saith, he shall have peace ; and so casts contempt upon the severest threatenings of God.

4. *This impenitency is a disappointing God in his end.*—It is a frustrating of his great design ; which is, to recover lost man to himself by Jesus Christ. And man is not recovered and brought back to God but by true repentance ; and it is his great end in sending his gospel to a people, to bring them to repentance ; and this end of God is now made void, when sinners repent not. Men are sometimes grieved, and sometimes angried, when they are disappointed in their end ; so is God said to be. He complains often of this in the scriptures : when he is disappointed in the end of his *corrections*, he complains, “ In vain have I smitten your children ; they received no correction.” (Jer. ii. 30.) And in the end of his *showing favour* : “ I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.” (Isai. i. 2.) And complains of his vineyard disappointing the end of his *care and cost* about it : “ When I looked that it should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes.” (Isai. v. 4.)

Our Saviour is said to “ rejoice,” when sinners were brought to repentance ; he now enjoyed the end of his coming. (Luke x. 21.) But then, at another time, he “ grieved, because of the hardness of men’s hearts.” (Mark iii. 5.) And there is still “ joy in heaven,” when sinners repent ; (Luke xv. 7 ;) and Christ’s faithful ministers rejoice also, when sinners repent ; for they now attain their end which they come upon, and will give up their account with joy concerning such, as they will do with grief concerning others. (Heb. xiii. 17.) Whereupon the apostle as a “ co-worker with ” God, beseecheth the Corinthians “ that they receive not the grace of God in vain ; ” (2 Cor. vi. 1 ;) that neither God nor himself may be disappointed in the end of their work, being “ co-workers.” And grace is bestowed in vain, when it brings not sinners to repentance, and when men accept not of the reconciliation mentioned in the foregoing chapter, which grace hath provided for them. It was a sad complaint of the prophet, when he saith, “ I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain ; ” (Isai. xlix. 4 ;) much more, for an apostle and a minister of the New Testament thus to complain ; and much more, for Christ to complain thus, as sometimes he did ; and most of all, for God himself to complain, as he doth in the case of sinners’ impenitency. So that impenitency under the gospel must needs be very sinful.

5. *This impenitency hath much folly in it, as well as sin.*—For men to run themselves into the destruction which they might avoid, and refuse the offers of God’s mercy and grace in the gospel,—is not this folly ? He is called “ a fool ” that hath “ a price in his hand, and hath no heart to use it ; ” (Prov. xvii. 16 ;) and the virgins in the parable, that lost their season of entering-in with the Bridegroom, are styled “ foolish virgins.” (Matt. xxv. 2.) And are not sinners, that continue in their sin and impenitency under the gospel, thus foolish ?

for they have, set before them, the fairest price and the richest seasons. The prodigal in the parable, when he came home to his father, is said to "come to himself:" (Luke xv. 17:) so, when a sinner repents, and comes home to God, he now "comes to himself," as if his former life was folly and madness.

6. *Impenitency under the gospel shows greater wilfulness in sin.*—As it argues great folly in the mind, so [does it argue great] perverseness in the will. And the more there is of the will in sin, the more sinful it is: as the Schoolmen say, *Bonitas et malitia moralis sunt potissimum in voluntate*.* Paul could say, [that] it was not he that sinned, when he did sin, because his will was against it: "The evil which I would not, that do I. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." (Rom. vii. 19, 20.) And this God chiefly looks at in actions both good and evil. There seems to be more wilfulness in impenitency under the gospel, than ever before. The more light and knowledge men sin against, the more will there is in sin; and the fairer offers are made to men of heaven and salvation, the more wilful is the refusal: and this is the case of sinners under the gospel. They do not repent, and they will not repent; they do not hear, and they will not hear; they do not leave their sin, and they will not leave it.

7. Lastly. *Impenitency under the gospel is attended with the greatest resistance of the Spirit.*—Greater than in former times. There is more of the Spirit goes along with the gospel-ministration, than with any before it; and there cannot be a disobedience to the gospel, without resisting that Spirit that goes along with it. Upon some the Spirit prevails, and brings them to repentance; and in others he is resisted; and some resist to that degree, that they are said to offer "despite unto the Spirit of grace." (Heb. x. 29.) And the sin that is accounted unpardonable, is committed against the Holy Ghost; and, it is thought, cannot be committed but under the gospel; whereby sinners are brought by a sinful, to a judicial, impenitency. (Heb. vi. 4—6.) So that by this time you may see the great sinfulness of impenitency under the gospel, beyond what was or could be in Sodom; whereby men's damnation will be more intolerable.

III. Now I come to the last particular,—to show *wherein the greater intolerableness will consist.*

1. *Such will suffer greater torments from their own consciences.*—The worm of conscience will gnaw them with greater pain: the reflections of it upon the sinner will be with greater force and fury. By how much men have sinned against greater light and mercy, by so much the remembrance of this will be the more afflictive. It was some aggravation of Dives's torments in hell,—the remembrance of former good things enjoyed: much more will the remembrance of a day of salvation lost, and of the refusal or neglect of gospel-grace and mercy, be afflictive to sinners in a state of damnation.

* "Moral goodness and wickedness have their principal seat in the will."—EDW.

The light [which] they have sinned against will be hell-fire in their consciences for ever; and the clearer light, the hotter fire: and the higher they have been lifted up by the opportunities of grace toward heaven, the lower they will fall under the weight of guilt and the rebukes of conscience.

2. *They will suffer more than others from the devil and his angels.*—For, that they are the executioners of God's wrath upon the wicked in this world, is out of question; and so, some think, they will be in the world to come, but only as under God's commission; which they ground upon that text: "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the tormentors," &c., (Matt. v. 25; xviii. 34,) by whom they understand evil spirits.

3. *Christ himself will appear in greatest severity against such.*—He is said to "be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:" (2 Thess. i. 7, 8:) by both which expressions are meant impenitent sinners under the gospel. His first coming was in a flame of love, to save men; but when men are impenitent, and reject his salvation, he will come next in flames of wrath, to take vengeance; and in the first place against these; to the Jew before the Gentile, (Rom. ii. 9,) and to the impenitent Christian before both.

4. *Witnesses will rise up against these more than any other sinners.*—The Heathen will come-in against them; as our Saviour speaks: "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it." (Matt. xii. 41, 42.)

The Heathen, who have gone further by the light of nature than many who have lived under the light of the gospel, will come-in as witnesses against them.

The Jew may come-in as a witness, also; who, under the darker light of the law, hath out-stripped many that were under a gospel-ministration.

The good angels may come-in as witnesses; who, having been present in the church-assemblies, have heard the calls there given to sinners to repent.

The bad angels may come-in, and plead against them, that *they* never refused the calls of the gospel to believe and repent; for they never had any.

Ministers may come-in as witnesses; who spent their pains and strength upon them, to invite and call them to repentance; but they would not hear.

Many of their neighbours and fellow-Christians may witness against them, who did believe and repent under the same means, whenas these did not. All which will contribute to make their damnation the more intolerable.

THE APPLICATION.

USE I. *We may hence learn what to judge of the Heathen, who have not heard of Christ.*—I shall not dispute, whether any of them may be saved, or not; yet this I can say,—that their damnation will be more tolerable than [that] of many others. Those that sinned without the law shall have more favourable judgment than those that sinned under the law; and those that detained only natural truth in unrighteousness, as the Heathen, shall fare better than those that so detained truth supernatural. (Rom. i. 18.)

And among the Heathen, Diogenes may fare better than Dionysius, Cato than Catiline, Vespasian than Diocletian. The last judgment will be exactly righteous.

USE II. *Hence it appears, that what is in itself a great favour and privilege to a people, may be the occasion of the greatest evil.*—As the gospel is in itself [a great privilege], yet will be an occasion to many of a damnation that will be most inexcusable and most intolerable. Christ was first preached to the Jews, which was their privilege: but they rejecting him, it brought sorer calamities upon their nation than ever before; and “the wrath came upon them to the uttermost;” (1 Thess. ii. 16;) and that Christ that is a corner-stone to his church, they first stumbled at, and then it fell upon them and did grind them to powder. (Matt. xxi. 42, 44.) And how it will fare with them in the day of judgment, he tells them, in John xii. 48: “The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you at the last day.” And what judgment will be more severe than theirs, who have refused and rejected words that came immediately from the mouth of the Son of God? words so full of grace and mercy, truth and faithfulness, wisdom and understanding! so that “never any man spake as this man.” (John vii. 46.) As the men of Bethshemesh rejoiced and offered sacrifices of thanksgiving at the coming of the ark to them; but it proved an occasion of the destruction of many thousands of them. (1 Sam. vi. 13—19.)

USE III. *We may hence take notice, how ineffectual the best outward means are of themselves to bring a people to repentance.*—Could any city have greater means for it than Capernaum? Here Christ wrought miracles that did amaze them, and preached doctrine that did astonish them, but not bring them to repentance. The gospel doth sometimes make some impressions upon the minds of people, that may still continue impenitent in their sin. Some, when they have heard a sermon, will applaud it, but not repent; whether it be from a conforming or non-conforming minister, yet by neither are [they] brought to repentance.

John Baptist preached repentance; and Christ came and preached, “Repent;” and yet the Jews, for the greatest part, repented not by the one or the other. Some are for gospel-preaching, some for preaching the law, and yet hold fast their sins under both. Such is the stupidity that is fallen upon man, and such deceitfulness [is there] in his heart, and [he] is so fast bound by the chains of his sin!

OBJECTION. "But God can bring man to repentance if he will."

ANSWER. God hath a twofold power,—*potestas absoluta, et ordinata*; "a power that he exerts immediately, or in the use of means." God can by his *absolute* power preserve man's life without eating or drinking; but he maintains it ordinarily in the use of means, which man is obliged to use, and, if he reject them, will be guilty of his own death. God affords sinners means to bring them to repentance; and, if they reject them, God is not obliged to work by his immediate power. Hereupon God is said to be "willing that all" should be saved, and "come to repentance," (2 Peter iii. 9,) by his calling them, and affording means to repentance.

QUESTION. "But why doth God make these means effectual to some, not to others, by giving special grace?"

ANSWER. When he that makes this question can resolve me why Christ wrought his mighty works in Chorazin and Bethsaida, and not in Tyre and Sidon, when he foresaw that Tyre and Sidon would thereupon repent in dust and ashes, and Chorazin and Bethsaida would not repent; I shall then answer him in his inquiry. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever." (Deut. xxix. 29.) Let sinners use the means, and wait there for God's special grace. And can Sodom justly complain that Christ came not to do his mighty works in it, and brought not the light of the gospel to it, when she offered such violence to the common dictates of the light and law of nature?

USE IV. See hence *what little reason men have to boast of their knowledge or gospel privileges, when these may turn to their sorer condemnation.*—"That servant which knoweth his Lord's will, and doeth not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke xii. 47.)

And so Christ speaks to the Pharisees, who boasted themselves to be the *פֶּחַחִים* *pechachim*, "the seeing men," whose eyes were opened: "But now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." (John ix. 41.)

And thus the Jews boasted over the Gentiles, that they "knew God's will, were instructed out of the law, and were instructors of the foolish, and teachers of babes;" (Rom. ii. 18—20;) and boasted themselves to be the circumcision: but yet, they not keeping the law, the uncircumcision should judge and condemn them. (Verse 27.) We have many among us who boast of a little knowledge [that] they have more than others, and have learned to talk and dispute of religion, and despise others as foolish, ignorant, blind, and babes; when all this may make their judgment the more intolerable. Some of the Jews have a tradition, that the holy fire of the altar was hid in a hole of a rock all the time of the captivity; and when at their return they looked for it, it was turned into a jelly; which they took and laid upon the altar, and [which] there was kindled into a fire again by the beams of the sun. When the light that is in the mind kindles a flame of love in the heart, and thence are presented holy sacrifices to

God; this is light sanctified, and sanctifying the soul: but when it rests in the mind, and is resisted in the heart and practice of men, it will, whether men will or no, shine into their consciences, first or last, to their greater terror and condemnation.

And therefore let men take heed of sin against light and knowledge; against the light of nature, the light of education, the light of good example; especially the light of the gospel: for such sins make the greatest noise in the conscience, do most harden men's hearts, make men self-condemned, and will most expose men at the day of judgment.

USE V. And so I come to the next use; which is, *to awaken us of this city and this nation, who have had gospel-favours and privileges above most people under heaven.*—May we not say of London, as Christ of Capernaum?—"O London, who hast been lift up to heaven!" And if any from hence shall perish, and be cast down to hell, how great will their fall be! It would be better perishing out of Tyre and Sidon, and Sodom, than out of London. *Tolluntur in altum, ut casu graviore ruant*;* as the poet speaks of men that fall from high places. What, though God hath by a wonderful hand opened us a door of liberty? what, though we have such plenty of excellent preaching? and what, though we are such constant hearers of these lectures, morning by morning? yet if any of us still continue impenitent, it will but increase our doom at doomsday.

OBJECTION. "But we hope that that day will never come; and all this talk of it is but to fright people a little into good manners; a device of princes, to keep people under government; or of priests, to make markets of their consciences."

ANSWER 1. It is true, few live as if they believed it. But can any man say that he is sure it will never come? I think no man dare say that. Therefore it is our best wisdom to prepare for that day which *may* come, though we should not be sure it *will* come. A wise man will provide against an evil that may possibly come, though he is not sure it will come; especially considering the dreadful consequence of being surprised.

2. And it is true that this day is delayed; but it is because God waits for sinners' repentance, and would have men saved, and enter in before the door be shut. (2 Peter iii. 9.)

3. Do any of us not believe it, when the devils themselves believe and tremble? when they said to our Saviour, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" (Matt. viii. 29;) it showed [that] they believed a day of judgment. But I spake of this before.

QUESTION. "But what will preserve us then from damnation, seeing such a judgment-day must certainly come?"

ANSWER. That which would have preserved Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, will preserve us; and that is true repentance; which you may know what it is by the description I have given before of its contrary, which is impenitency. Let us all in good earnest turn to God and repent. Let us repent of our pride and immodest

* "They are raised up on high, that they may descend with a heavier fall."—EDIT.

dresses in apparel, and reform; let our women take down their high-towering dresses, and our men shorten their monstrous perukes. Let us repent of our strife and contention, and the persecutions that have been amongst us. Let us repent of the great neglect of family-duties, and our spending so much time at taverns and coffee-houses. Let others repent of their frauds in commerce and trading; and others, of their oaths and blasphemies; and others, of their extortion and oppression; others, of their base temporizing in religion. Let children repent of disobedience to parents; and parents, of their neglect of the instruction and education of their children: so masters and servants, of the neglect of the duties of their mutual relation. Let us repent of our careless hearing, and our unprofitable hearing; of our loose observation of the sabbath, and unworthy receiving [of] the Lord's supper; and "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." (Matt. iii. 8.) Let London remember what befell Sodom for not repenting, and take heed of Sodom's sins; (2 Peter ii. 6;) which are said to be "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness," (Ezek. xvi. 49,) and "fornication, and going after strange flesh;" and now have "suffered the vengeance of eternal fire:" (Jude 7:) that this city may not be called "Sodom's sister," as Jerusalem was, for being so like her in her sin; (Ezek. xvi. 48;) and her fruit not like the apples of Sodom, fair without, and within nothing but ashes.

But I have better hope concerning this city; and that, as God hath wonderfully saved it, so he will do still; and that its case is not as Sodom's, not to have in it ten righteous persons, when Abraham interceded for the sparing of it. And though this city was once laid in ashes, yet not as Sodom, which was never built again, and is now a bituminous lake, called *Asphaltites*; and the waters of it are deadly, and the fumes out of it mortal, and the ground and trees about it barren; which Pliny, Solinus, Diodorus Siculus, and other heathen writers, have taken notice of. But London stands up out of its ruins, to the terror of those that designed it to oblivion and perpetual desolation; and is more populous than ever: and the joyful sound of the gospel, and the voice of the turtle, are yet heard in her streets; and not the voice of owls and satyrs, as is foretold of Babylon, (Isai. xiii. 21,) "which is spiritually called Sodom," (Rev. xi. 8,) and was typed by the city Jericho, which would expose the man to a fatal curse that should attempt to rebuild it. (Joshua vi. 26.)

USE VI. *From all that hath been said, we may, lastly, conclude, that sinners that are impenitent have little reason to flatter themselves because of their present impunity.*—Let them consider how it will fare with them in the day of judgment. Christ refers to that in the text; and those who have eyes to see afar off, will look so far as that day. So did Paul: "Wherefore we strive, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." (2 Cor. v. 9, 10.) And hereupon he counted it a small thing to be judged of men, or at "man's day," looking to the judgment to come, and that great day of the Lord.

(1 Cor. iv. 3—5.) The fallen angels are said to be bound in chains of darkness, “reserved unto the judgment of the great day;” (Jude 6;) and so are impenitent sinners reserved to that day; when, notwithstanding their present impunity, they shall then fall under judgment more intolerable than that of Sodom. As a malefactor, that is kept in the gaol under bolts and fetters till the assize, hath little reason to rejoice in his present freedom from the sentence of the judge: and this is the case of sinners: “Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” (Eccles. viii. 11.) And so I make the conclusion of this discourse with that which Solomon makes “the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” (Eccles. xii. 13, 14.)

SERMON III.

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HOW THE UNCHARITABLE AND DANGEROUS CONTENTIONS THAT ARE AMONG PROFESSORS OF THE TRUE RELIGION, MAY BE ALLAYED.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.—Galatians v. 15.

My business from this scripture is, to inquire into the cause, the danger, and the cure of uncharitable contentions in the church of God.

The holy apostle Paul having some few years before planted a church in Galatia, a region in the upper parts of the Lesser Asia, there soon crept in a sort of false teachers; who contended, that the Mosaical ceremonies—in particular, that circumcision—was still to be observed, even by the believing Gentiles; and that the Christians were not justified before God by faith, but by the works of the law. Which two errors, when he had fully confuted in the former part of this epistle, he applies in this chapter and in the next: 1. By way of *exhortation*, to “stand fast in” this their Christian “liberty;” (verse 1;) which he backs with divers arguments. 2. By way of *direction*, to use the same aright, “not for an occasion to the flesh,” the works whereof he afterwards reckons up at large; (verses 19—22;) but rather, that they should “by love serve one another,” (verse 13,) and abound in all holiness and goodness, which he enlargeth upon in the rest of this chapter and in the next.