

Inference 4. Then as you would not have the works and labours of your hands blasted, beware of those sins that provoke God to blow upon them. Think not that injustice, oppression, deceit and perjury should ever profit you. God hath cursed all the ways of sin, and you cannot prosper in them. Above all, beware of atheism and irreligion: God will not own them that disown him, and slight his worship. I doubt your profanation of the Lord's day, by drunkenness, idleness, and worldly employments, is not the least cause of those disappointments and losses that have befallen you: the first day of the week, like the first-fruits of the Jews' *harvests*, should sanctify the whole lump.

And let none pretend that multiplicity of business will not allow them time and disposition for sabbath-work. If you be too busy to attend the Lord's service, he can quickly give you a writ of ease, and make you keep more resting days from your labours than you are willing to do. The Lord would not excuse the Israelites, no, not in their busiest seasons, the times of earing and harvest, and the very building of the tabernacle; but all must give way to the sabbath. And I am sure the promise of blessing and success is made to the conscientious observation of it: Isa. lviii. 13, 14. "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure upon my holy day; and call the sabbath a Delight, the holy of the Lord, Honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasures, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord:" There is a recompence to the soul. "And he shall cause thee to ride on high places of the earth:" There is a reward to the body. Godliness is profitable to all things.



THE

SEAMAN'S RETURN.

SERMON VI.

DEUT. xxxiii. 19.

They shall call the people unto the mountain, there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: For they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of the treasures hid in the sand.

THIS scripture is part of the last words of Moses: a man that in his life was a great blessing to Israel: and when he was to be separated from them by death, he pronounces distinct and suitable blessings upon all the tribes. As Christ parted from his disciples,

blessing them, so doth Moses from his people; only with this difference, Moses as God's mouth pronounced, but the great God of heaven and earth alone could confer the blessing. Moses blessed them authoritatively, but could not bless them potestatively, as Christ did. Now these words contain the blessing of the tribe of Zebulun, which was the tribe of seamen. And in them we shall consider these two parts, viz.

1. Their privilege.

2. Their duty.

First, Their privilege, "That they should suck of the abundance of the seas, and of the treasures hid in the sand." To suck the abundance of the sea is a* metonymical expression, signifying as much as to be enriched and stored with the wares and merchandise imported by sea to them. Geographers attribute to the sea, arms and bosoms; and the scripture breasts. The sea, like an indulgent mother, embraces those that live upon it in her bosom, and with full flowing breasts nourisheth them, and feeds them as a mother doth the infant that sucks and depends for its livelihood upon her breasts.

And these breasts do not only afford those that hang upon them the necessaries of life, bread, raiment, &c. but the riches, ornaments, and delights of life also. "The treasures hid in the sand," † as gold, coral, ambergrease, and such like precious and rich treasures which it yields. This was the blessing and privilege of the tribe of Zebulun, whose cities and villages were commodiously situated upon the seashore for merchandise and traffic: as you may see Josh. xix. 11.

Secondly, Their duty to which these mercies and privileges obliged them: "They shall call the people to the mountain, there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness." By the *mountain*, we are here to understand the *temple*, which Moses, by the spirit of prophecy, foresaw to be upon mount Sion, and mount Moriah; which two were as the shoulders that supported it, ver. 12. Here was the worship of God; the sacrifices were here offered up to him. And hither Zebulun, in the sense of God's mercies to them, should call the people, i. e. say some, their own people, their families and neighbours; or as others, the strangers that were among them for traffic; saying, as Isa. ii. 3. "Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord, to the mountain of the God of Jacob." And here they shall offer *the sacrifices of righteousness*. By which we are to understand their thank-offerings for the mercies they had received of the Lord. The Jews had not only expiatory sacrifices to procure the pardon of sins committed, but eucharistical sacrifices, or thank-offerings, to testify the sense they had of mercies received. These sacrifices typified moral duties; and when these types were abolished, the apostle shews,

* *Affluentiam maris sugere, est marinis bonis, & mercibus abundare.* Glas.

† *Referunt ad ea quæ emovere solent maria, scil. ad auri fodinas. Effluent e terra arenosa aurum.* Pol. Synop. in loc.

“that the calves of our lips, the sacrifice of praise,” are in the stead of them, Heb. xiii. 15.

So then the sum of all this is, that when they returned from sea, or had received the blessings thereof from the hand of God, they should repair to the place of his worship, and there acknowledge and praise the God of their mercies. So that the whole verse thus explained, casts itself into this doctrinal observation.

Doct. That it is the special duty of seamen, when God returns them to their habitations in peace, thankfully to acknowledge and bless his name, for all the preservations and mercies they have received from his hand.

These are mercies indeed which are obtained from God by prayer, and returned to him again by praise. When we have received our mercies, God expects his praises: After the Psalmist had opened the hazards and fears of seamen upon the stormy ocean, and the goodness of God in bringing them to their desired haven, Psal. cvii. 30. he presently calls upon them for this duty, ver. 31. “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!”

O that men would! why, how is it imaginable they should not? He hath the heart of a beast, not of a man, that would not. Did I say the heart of a beast? Give me that word again. There is a kind of gratitude, even in beasts, to their benefactors. “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib,” Isa. i. 3.

Now the method into which I will cast the discourse, shall be,
First, To open the nature of the duty, and to shew you what it is to praise God for his mercies.

Secondly, To give you the grounds and reasons of the duty, why God expects it, and you ought to give it to him. And then,

Thirdly, To apply it in the several uses it is improveable unto.

I. The nature of the duty needs opening; for few understand what it is. Alas! it is another manner of thing than a customary, formal, cold *God be thanked*. Now, if we search into the nature of this duty, we shall find that whoever undertakes this angelic work, must,

First, Be a heedful observer of the mercies he receives. This is fundamental to the duty. Where no observations of mercies have been made, no praises for them can be returned. God was never honoured by his unobserved mercies. When David had opened the providences of God to the several degrees and orders of men, in its various administrations, and called upon them distinctly to praise God for them; he adds, in the close of all, “Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord,” Psal. cvii. *ult.* It is God’s charge against Israel, Hosea ii. 8. “She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver:” *i. e.* She did not observe and take notice of these mercies, as coming from my hand; but only

looked at the next cause. Thus it is with many, they think not upon their own mercies: others can observe them, but they cannot; they can quickly observe what troubles befall them, but take little notice of their own mercies. Such men can never be thankful.

Secondly, The thankful man must not only *observe* what mercies he hath, and from whom they come; but must particularly consider them in their natures, degrees, seasons, and manner of conveyance; there is much of God's glory, and our comfort lost for want of this. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein," Psal. cxi. 2. And indeed, there is no employment in all the world, that yields more pleasure to a gracious soul, than the anatomizing of providence doth. How sweet is it to observe the mutual respects, coincidences, and introductive occasions of our mercies; every minute circumstance hath its weight and value here. He hath little pleasure in his meat, that swallows it whole without chewing.

Thirdly, The thankful person must duly estimate and value his mercies. It is impossible that man can be thankful for mercies he little esteems. Israel could not praise God for that angels food with which he fed them, whilst they despised it in saying, There is nothing but this *manna*.

And surely it shews the great corruption of our nature, that those things which should raise the value of mercies with us, cause us the more to slight them: yet thus it falls out. The commonness, or long-continuance of mercies with us, which should endear them the more, and every day increase our obligation to God, causes them to seem but cheap and small things. And therefore doth God so often threaten them, yea, and remove them, that their worth and excellency may thereby be acknowledged.

Fourthly, The thankful person must faithfully record his mercies, else God cannot have his due praise for them. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits," Psal. ciii. 2. Forgotten mercies bear no fruit: a bad memory in this case, makes a barren heart and life.

I confess the mercies of God are such a multitude, that a memory of brass cannot retain them. "I will come before thee in the multitude of thy mercies," saith David, Psal. v. 7. They are called "showers of blessings, Ezek. xxxiv. 26. And as impossible it is distinctly to recount all our mercies, as to number the drops of rain that fall in a shower. Nevertheless, it hath been the pious care and endeavour of the people of God, to preserve and perpetuate his mercies, by using all the helps to memory they could. Therefore they have kept registers, Exod. xvii. 14. entitled Psalms, *to bring to remembrance*, Ps. lxx. *title*; denominated places from the mercies received there. Thus Jacob called the place where he found so much mercy, Bethel. Hagar named the well, where God unexpectedly relieved

her, Beer-lahai-roi, the well of him that liveth and looketh upon me, Gen. xvi. 13, 14.

They have stamped the mercies upon the days in which they received them. Thus the Jews called those days in which God wrought their deliverance, *Purim*, after the name *Pur*, signifying the lot Haman had cast for their lives; Esther ix. 26. Yea, they have called their mercies upon their children, 1 Sam. i. 20. Thus thankful souls have striven to recognize their mercies, that God might not lose the praise, nor themselves the comfort of them.

Fifthly, The thankful person must be suitably affected with the mercies he receives. It is not a *speculative*, but an *affectionate* remembrance that becomes us: then God hath his glory, when the sense of his mercies melts our hearts into holy joy, love, and admiration. Thus David sits down before the Lord like a man astonished at his goodness to him; 2 Sam. vii. 20. "And what can David say more? "for thou Lord knowest thy servant." The mercies of God have made the saints hearts leap for joy within them: Psal. xcii. 4. "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy works; therefore "will I triumph in the works of thy hands." Mercies are not mercies, deliverances are not deliverances to us, if we that receive them are not glad of them.

Sixthly, The thankful person must order his conversation suitably to the engagements that his mercies have put him under. When we have said all, it is the life of the thankful, that is the very life of thankfulness. Obedience and service are the only real manifestations of gratitude. "He that offereth praise glorifieth me: and to "him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation "of God," Psal. l. 23. Set down this for an everlasting truth, That God was never praised and honoured by an abused mercy. God took it ill from Hezekiah, "That he rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him," 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. He that is truly thankful will say as David, Ps. cxvi. 12. "What shall "I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" We then glorify God with his mercies when we employ them to right ends, when we thankfully take our own share of comfort from them, receiving them with thanksgiving, as from the hand of a father. Mr. Swinnock * tells of a young man, who, lying upon his sick-bed, was always calling for meat; but as soon as it was brought him, he shook and trembled dreadfully at the sight of it, and so continued till it was taken away; and before his death acknowledged God's justice, so that in his health he ordinarily received his meat without thanksgiving.

Use all God's mercies with thankfulness; God will remember them in fury, who forget him in his favours.

And think not what God bestows upon you is wholly for your own use: but honour God with your mercies by clothing the naked and

* Swinnock's Christian Man's Calling, page 409.

feeding the hungry, especially such as are godly. This is a due improvement of your estates; thus you may make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. Ah, how little do we consider what praise, what glory we may occasion this way, from others, to the name of God! It is storied of * Dionysius the Syracusan *tyrant*, that when he saw what heaps of gold and silver his son hoarded up in his closet, he asked him what he meant to let it lie there, and not to make friends with it, to get the kingdom after his death? O son (said he) thou hast not a spirit capable of a kingdom. Thus honour the Lord with your substance; look upon all you have as your Master's talents, for which you must give an account: and to use and employ them for God, that you may give up your account with joy; and then you will shew yourselves thankful indeed. Thus you see what is included in real thankfulness. O, it is another matter than we take it to be.

2. Next I promised to give you the grounds and reasons of this duty; why you are obliged after the reception of mercies to such a thankful return of praises. And, among many, I will only single out these three, and briefly open them.

First, God requires and expects it. It is so special and peculiar a part of his glory, as he will never part with it. As great landlords oblige their tenants to a homage and service, when they make over their estates to them, and reserve a quit-rent to themselves, which they value at a high rate; so God, when he bestows deliverances of mercies upon us, still reserves an acknowledgment to himself: and this is dear to him, he will not endure to be defrauded of it; much less that it be given to another. You find this reservation of praise expressly made by him in Psal. l. 15. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Where you have the request, the grant, and the reservation in the grant, q. d. When I have granted thee thy desire, see thou do not defraud me of my glory. There be three things in every mercy, the *matter* of it, the *comfort* of it, and the *glory* of it. The two first God makes over freely to us, he gives the mercies themselves, he allows us to suck out all the lawful pleasure and delight that is in them; but the third he reserves to himself, and will never part with it to any other. If an Hezekiah himself render not to God due acknowledgments, as well as God loves him, there shall be great wrath upon him and Judah for the default, 2 Chron. xxxii. 26.

Secondly, You are under manifold engagements to render it to the Lord.

(1.) Common ingenuity obliges to a due acknowledgment of favours freely received; and unthankfulness on that score is the odium of mankind. *Ingratum si dicas, omnia dixeris*. You cannot give a

* Justin, lib. 51.

man a more odious character among men, than to say, He is an ungrateful man.

(2.) The examples of the very heathens will condemn you. They praised their gods, which yet were no gods, when they received any deliverance, Judges xvi. 24. Shall idols, dung-hill deities, receive their sacrifices and praises, whilst the true God is forgotten?

Nay, (3.) Many of you have formally and expressly obliged your souls to it, by solemn vows and promises in the day of your distress: and yet will you deal perfidiously with God? Will you not pay the vows which your lips have uttered? Certainly you can never free your souls, from the guilt of perfidiousness against God, whilst you give him not the glory due to his name.

3: *Lastly*, Your ingratitude is the ready way to deprive you of the mercies you have, and to with-hold from you the mercies you might have in your future distresses and wants. He that is ungrateful for mercies received, provokes God to remove them. Thus it fell out with ungrateful Israel, Hosea ii. 5, 8, 9. "She did not know, (i. e. "she did not with consideration and thanks duly acknowledge) "that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil. Therefore will I return, "and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the "season thereof; and will recover my wool and my flax." Thus they suffered their mercies to lapse into the Lord's hand for non-payment of their duties. If you are weary of your mercies, and willing to be rid of them, you cannot take a more effectual course than to forget from whom you had them, and with-hold his praise for them.

And then, for future mercies and deliverances, you have no ground to expect any more from God, whom you have thus requited for former favours. He that gives no thanks for one mercy, hath little ground to expect another. It was a sad word which God spake upon this very provocation, Judg. x. 11, 12, 13. when a new distress befel Israel by the Ammonites, and they cried to the Lord for help, he tells them that he had many times delivered them from their enemies: "Yet (saith he) have you forsaken me and served other gods. "Wherefore I will deliver you no more; go and cry to the gods "which ye have chosen, and let them deliver you in the time of "your tribulation." Q. d. With what face can you come to me for new mercies and deliverances, when yourselves know how former mercies have been abused! Think ye that I am weary of my mercies to cast them away upon such unthankful wretches? No, expect no more mercies from me, "I will deliver you no more." One of the fathers calls ingratitude, *Obex infernalis*, *An hellish stop*, which interrupts the course and current of all God's mercies. Mercy is not only a precious thing, too good to be cast away, but it is a very tender thing, and God deeply resents the abuses of it. Thus you see the grounds and reasons of your duty; it now remains that we apply it.

Use 1. It is your unquestionable duty to return praises upon every receipt of mercies? Then, in the first place, bear your shame and just reproof for your manifest unthankfulness. You dare not deny but you have received many signal and eminent mercies from the hands of God. If you should deny that, I need go no farther to prove you prodigiously ungrateful. But it is too manifest to be denied: you have found God a very present help in trouble: his mercy hath often rescued you out of the jaws of death. Some of you have been in dangers in the deeps; in deaths oft: you have been put to your wit's end; all visible hope and help failed. You might have said with the Psalmist, Psal. cxiii. 4. "I looked upon my right hand, and there was none; and upon the left, but refuge failed." You have seen your companions intombed before your eyes in the seas, and concluded in your own thoughts your turn was next. You have been in danger by barbarous enemies that have chased you upon the sea to make you a prey: yea, it may be you have been a prey to them, and never thought to have seen the land of your nativity, your houses, wives, and children, any more. You have languished under dangerous diseases, and that remote from friends and necessary accommodations; you have lost your estates, and been reduced to low ebb, and never thought to have seen a day of prosperity any more; yet hath the Lord delivered you out of all your troubles. He hath provided unexpected means of preservation, when the proud waters were ready to go over your souls. And though others went down before your eyes, you were marked out for deliverance, God spake to the raging waves, saying, Touch not this man, I will not deliver him up, though I have done so by others. When cruel enemies chased you, he delivered you, causing the darkness of the night to interpose seasonably betwixt you and them; as the dark side of the cloud shadowed Israel from the Egyptians that pursued them, Exod. xiv. 20. sometimes giving you a favourable gale, which blew mercy and deliverance to you: sometimes by strengthening you to resist their furious attacks, and delivering you from their rage: or if he delivered you into their hands, yet there he preserved you, enabling you to endure their severities, or causing the enemy to treat you well; and finding out a way which you knew not, to bring you at last out of the house of bondage.

He pitied you under your dangerous diseases; and though necessary accommodations and means might be wanting, he was your physician, and healed you; he recovered you immediately without means, or blessed weak and small means to your good. When you were reduced by losses and captivities to a low ebb, so that you might say as the church, Lam. iii. 17. I forgot prosperity; he hath not only recruited thy strength but thy estate also: and when both thy body and estate, like an old leaky ship, have been ready to sink, he hath stopped the leaks in both, careened, repaired, and launched thee into the world again, as whole, as sound, and as strong as ever.

And now, reader, suffer me to account and expostulate a little with thy conscience ; what hath the fruit of all these mercies been to thee ? And how hast thou carried it since those days, towards the God of thy mercies ? Hast thou indeed been melted by the sense of all this kindness, into love, thankfulness, and new obedience ? Have these favours engaged thee to more strictness in thy duties, and greater watchfulness against sin ? Hast thou said, with that good man, Ezra ix. 13, 14. “ And now my God, seeing thou hast punished me less than mine iniquities deserve, and hast given me such deliverances as these, should I again break thy commandments ? ” If it be so, surely mercy and goodness shall follow thee all the days of thy life. The Lord then reckons all these mercies well bestowed, and will never repent that he hath done thee good.

But I fear this is not thy case. Sure I am, there are some among you that have quickly forgotten the God that delivered you. Some that have abused him to his face, by ascribing his mercies to good luck, chance, and fortune : not once owning him as your deliverer. And some that have made his mercies weapons of sin, to wound him withal, wasting your estates by prodigality, which were given to refresh your families, and God's poor ; yea, abusing them to drunkenness and luxury. And is this the thanks you return him ? For which of all my good works (saith Christ to the Jews) do you stone me ? So say I, for which of all God's kindnesses to you, do you thus dishonour, and abuse him ? O let shame cover your faces this day ! Go, reader, fold down this leaf, and get thee to thy knees, and say, I am the man to whom this reproof is sent. I have abused the God of my mercies, I have turned his grace into wantonness. Smite with Ephraim upon thy thigh, and say, *What have I done ?* Mourn heartily for thy unkindness to thy best friend, “ The God that hath done thee good all thy life long, and deserves other returns from thee than these.”

Use 2. Lastly, It calls upon you all to be thankful for your mercies. Chrysostom once wished for a voice like thunder, that all men might hear him. O that I could so call you to this duty, that some of you might effectually hear God's call in this exhortation !

Will you own the hand that delivers you, that feeds, clothes, and heals you ? Will you resolve to live the life of praise, and render to the Lord according to the benefits you have received ? Will you indeed walk humbly, and thankfully, under all your deliverances, and successes, and glorify God by that wherewith he hath comforted and refreshed you ? If there be any saving knowledge of God, and spiritual sense of his love in your souls, methinks I should prevail with you ; for do but weigh these following arguments seriously, and they will engage you to it.

Argument 1. How freely have all your mercies streamed to you from the fountain of grace ? There was nothing in you to engage it.

The very notion of mercy includes freeness ; they are all bestowed upon us, not only as we are *immerentes*, but *male merentes*, undeserving,

but ill-deserving creatures; not only without our merits, but against our merits. And what though there be a concurrence of your abilities, head-work and hand-work in the procurement of some of your mercies, yet still those mercies are the pure effects of free-grace: for all those endeavours of yours had signified nothing to their procurement, without God's blessing; yea, and that wisdom and industry which you have used, were themselves the free gifts of God. You know there are thousands in the world as industrious and wise as you, and such as never provoked God by such sins as you have; who yet are denied the mercies you enjoy. O how should this endear you to God!

Argument 2. How seasonably your mercies have been bestowed upon you in the very point of extremity and danger! God hath on purpose suffered it to grow to an extremity, that thereby he might commend his mercy to you with greater advantage. "In the mount of the Lord it hath been seen," Gen. xxii. 14. without this God saw his mercies would have been slighted, and low prized by you: But God hath watched the opportunity of bestowing his goodness upon you, for no other end but to magnify his mercies in your eyes, and make the deeper and more lasting impressions upon your hearts. Shall such mercies, which at first were so amazing and overwhelming to you, at the reception whereof you were like men that dreamed, as the Psalmist speaks, Psalm cxxvi. 1. so soon grow stale and common? God forbid!

Argument 3. How special and distinguishing have some of your mercies been? God hath not dealt with every one as he hath with you. Are not some that went out with you found wanting at your return: They are among the dead, it may be among the damned, and you among the living, yet enjoying the capacity and the means of salvation. God hath prospered your voyage, and returned you with success; you have sucked the abundance of the sea, and the treasures hid in the sand, as the text speaks; but others may say as Naomi, Ruth i. 21. "I went out full, and am come back empty." I went out full of hopes, and am come back with sad disappointments. And is not this a strong tie to thanksgiving?

Argument 4. Did not your mercies find you under great guilt? You know what your own transgressions against the Lord were, and yet such was the strength of mercy, that it brake through all your great provocations, and made its way to you through a multitude of iniquities. It came triumphing over all your great unworthiness; and is not such mercy worthy to be admired, and recorded for ever! O what will affect and melt your hearts, if this will not? Surely such mercies have a constraining power in them, upon all sensible souls.

Argument 5. To conclude; if all the goodness of God which hath passed before your eyes, does indeed prevail upon you to love the Lord, and fear to offend him; if it really constrains you to give up yourselves, and all you have, to be his; then all this is but the be-

ginning of mercies, and you shall see yet greater things than these. God hath more mercies yet behind, and those of a higher kind and more excellent nature than these temporal mercies are. You are now delivered from the dangers of the sea, and have escaped those perils: O but what is this to deliverance from wrath to come? You have been preserved from, or delivered out of Turkish slavery; but what is that to a deliverance from the curse of the law, the bondage of your lusts, and the power of Satan? Happy souls, if these deliverances do in any measure prove introductive to the great salvation.

THE CONCLUSION.

Thus I have, as the Lord hath enabled me, endeavoured to chuse and improve proper subjects for your meditation in every condition that befalls you. I cannot carry these truths one degree farther, it is the Lord only that can make them effectual to your souls. But it is my earnest request to you, masters, that have the over-sight, and must give an account for your companies, that you will not only read and consider these things yourselves, but that you will at fit seasons, especially upon the Lord's day, read and inculcate them upon your servants and company; and that, as those who must give an account. Will not this be a better expence of that precious and hallowed time, than to spend it in sleeping in your cabins, or drinking in tipling-houses? All that sin of theirs which you may prevent, and do not, becomes your own sin. And have you not personal sins enough already, but you must draw the guilt of their sins upon you also? I beseech you, and it is my last request, that you will faithfully labour, that you and your companies may serve the Lord.