

ORIGINAL SERMONS.

SERMON I.

HOLINESS THE WAY OF SAFETY.

1 PETER III. 13. *

*And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers
of that which is good?*

You are not wholly ignorant, my friends, of those distracting hurries and confusions, which at this day do fill the world: you have heard once and again, of these rumours of wars that are amongst us. Though we ourselves feel but little, compared with what others do, and meet with few pressing perplexities, in comparison of some that are daily groaning and mourning, being almost crushed with their heavy burdens; yet so much we know by undoubted reports, as, one would think, should be sufficient to alarm our fears and quicken us to our duty, were not our hearts as hard as they really are.

The great and all-wise governor of the world, is alarming the inhabitants who are in it by his stupendous and amazing providences; the dispensations we are under, are very awful and majestic. The spurious brood of Babylon, is contending by all possible methods to enlarge their antichristian territories, and deluge the world by a flood of popery; the beast that hath many heads and horns, hath them all at work. Behold a confederacy betwixt hell, Rome, and France; these, with their accomplices, are joined in a league to extirpate the precious sons of Zion,

* The substance of what was preached at Pontefract on two Lord's days, namely, Feb. 5th, and 19, 1692-3.

who are comparable to fine gold, and to extend the dominions of Beelzebub, the prince of darkness. Troops of infernal forces, headed and commanded by the hellish Abaddon, are ranging up and down the earth to dethrone, if it were possible, the King of heaven. However, no stone will be unturned, no means unattempted, to destroy his subjects that are upon the earth; for those that have got to glory, are removed safe out of the reach and gun-shot of the devil's imps. The enemies of the Lord and of his Christ, being filled with satanical rage, are unwearied in their endeavours to pull down God's sanctuary, to lay waste his heritage, to root out his people and interest, to turn his church, that pleasant Eden, into a howling and desolate wilderness.

These things, ringing in our ears, speak loudly to us to look about us. Surely it is the duty, and will be the care of all those that would not prove themselves fools at last, to seek out for shelter and security, when there is ground to fear that the furious storms of divine wrath are approaching. None, surely, will be so stupid and sottish as to charge us with folly, if we do industriously consult our own safety at such a time. We should be concerned to take the best course for our own preservation; and, what that is, the words of the text will inform you, namely, to follow that which is good. To be walking in the way of duty, which the Lord hath chalked out for us, is the most likely way to have protection, amidst outward confusions and threatening calamities. When there is a calm within, storms without will not be so likely to unhinge us. Outward enemies, with all their diabolical stratagems, will not be so frightful, when our lusts and corruptions, that are our inward and therefore our greatest enemies, have lost their power. Our holiness will be the best defence that we can make, as will be evident in the prosecution of the words we have read to you, to which now we shall gradually approach.

The penman of this epistle had to do with the Jews; the charge of those of the circumcision was committed to him, and he was accordingly concerned for them. He could not visit them all in person, because they were dispersed into so many and such remote regions; his tongue could not reach them, but his pen must; therefore he writes this epistle, that it might find them out in their several places of abode, chap. i. 1. The apostle's design here is, partly to confirm those saints in the belief of the gospel, and to testify that the doctrine of the grace of God through Christ, which they had embraced and did profess, was indeed infallibly true, being the same that had been preached by the prophets to the fathers of the old tes-

tament; and partly to exhort them to the practice of godliness, and a conversation suitable to the gospel.

1. This he doth more generally, as to sundry duties incumbent on all believers, which we need not now insist on, chap. ii. 13.

2. More particularly, as to some duties that concerned them in their special relations, callings, and conditions; as of subjects to magistrates, servants to masters, husbands and wives mutually to each other, of sufferers to their oppressors and persecutors, ministers towards their people, of the younger sort towards their elders, intermixing several duties of concernment to all. We shall only take notice of what lies before us in the former part of this third chapter.

The subject matter, about which the apostle treats in the beginning of this chapter, is the duties of husbands and wives to each other; for such is our weakness, if not wickedness, that we need direction in every condition. Wives, first, must see to discharge their duties. Two are here particularized.

I. Wives are to be in subjection to their own husbands, yea, though they were unbelievers, that so they might be won hereby; that when they saw such fruits and effects of the word in their wives, they might be induced to a liking of it. This is instructive to us. Hast thou a careless husband, that does not regard the great business of religion? Look to thy own duty; it may be, by thy regular and conscientious walking thou mayest gain him. Copy over the sermon in thy life, that he may read it there, if he will not hear it: words will not do, thou hast tried; let thy gospel-becoming conversation read him a lecture; let thy religious actions speak so much the louder; thou knowest not what works may do.

II. Here is a particular direction to teach them how they must be adorned. And that—

1. Negatively; ver. 3, "Whose adorning, let it not be," &c. He doth not absolutely condemn all kinds of ornaments, but that which is excessive, (say commentators,) and above persons' rank and condition in the world, and which they spend too much time about; he taxes that which springs from pride, vanity, &c. or tends to the provoking or cherishing of it; that which doth bespeak an unchaste heart, or may cause scandal to others, especially when this is accompanied with the neglect of inward beauty and spiritual ornaments.

If the gallants of our day would look more into this glass, and less into others, it is probable, the frame of their souls would be more conformable to the rule of the word; yea, and their bodies too; but it may be, many never look at it, or but

very seldom, for they seem to miss it very strangely. It is true, it is ordinary in this case, rather to observe what others do than what the word of God says; and if some persons' inward man had been more strictly looked after, and the outward man less, their souls had been more clean and pure; yea, if they had spent that time about them, which they might very well have spared as to the body. Well look to it, however, that there be not thread-bare souls under silken garments. Be careful lest external, gaudy dresses, be only marks to cover unclean, polluted hearts. It avails not to have the outside curiously adorned and decked, so as nothing can be espied amiss, if the inside be odious in the sight of God.

2. Positively: "But let it be the hidden man of the heart," ver. 4. Would you be curious and critical in adorning any thing? Let it be the inward man; spiritual ornaments are to be preferred. Let none say, these are low, mean things, and will not set them off; they are mistaken, this would be to contradict the apostle, for he tells us, that a meek and quiet spirit is an ornament; yea, and what is more, it "is, in the sight of God, of great price." Divine graces, will make you more truly amiable, than outward, adventitious finery.

But some, we do not say all, seek more to please themselves and a vain world than God; who had rather be the objects of others' admiration, than have divine approbation: hence it is, that they take more pains on a Lord's day morning about their bodies, and that needlessly, than they do upon their knees for their souls. But say some, what? would you have us out of fashion? No. This inward adorning was the old fashion, and the best, see ver. 5. And, it is probable, that antiquity here, is an argument for the excellency of it; it is a fashion which new modes will scarcely amend.

He comes then to acquaint husbands with something of their duty; "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge," &c. ver. 7, either, say some upon the place, according to the knowledge of the divine will which by the gospel they had obtained; or, prudently and wisely, as becometh those that understand their duty. They must give their wives honour, because the weaker vessels, and joint heirs of the grace of life. Before, wives were to be subject in another sense, but here, they stand upon a level with their husbands, there being neither male nor female in Christ, one being accepted by him as well as another; also, that their "prayers be not hindered."

Having dismissed that subject, he comes in ver. 8, to acquaint them, that, as brethren, they were to maintain and nourish mutual love and regard for one another: "Finally, be ye all

of one mind," &c. An excellent lesson for church members. "Be of one mind," as to essentials at least, in the great and fundamental articles of faith; and, as much as can be, in accidentals, and circumstantialia too. Work goes on a great deal better, when persons are like minded, in the circumstantialia of religion; yet it is not absolutely, and indispensably necessary, neither is it to be expected that it will be so, in minute punctilios; but there should be a mutual forbearance, for all that love as brethren. Though there be some different apprehensions and various sentiments, in those matters that are eccentric from fundamental truths, let not this alienate one another's affections; for then nothing will go on to purpose. We have seen what a flame hath been kindled in the world, by an overheated zeal for the appendages of religion; many have been so eager about fringes and phylacteries, that they have neglected the substance, which hath been no little support to Satan's kingdom, and no little hindrance to the building of God's house. O that the enemy of souls might be no longer successful this way amongst us! Let us endeavour to avoid every thing that might hinder an amicable accommodation amongst christian brethren.

In the next place, the apostle comes to shew them, how, as distressed and afflicted ones, they should demean themselves towards oppressors and persecutors; ver. 9, "Not rendering evil," &c.

And hereof he renders sundry reasons: namely, because hereto "they were called," and hereby they "should inherit a blessing;" which he confirms by a testimony of David, promising life and good days, to those that "eschew evil and do good," and threatening them that do contrary, ver. 10, 11, 12, cited out of Psalm xxxiv. Another reason or motive, to provoke them to such conduct towards their persecutors, is, because this would be for their security, as in the words of the text. "And who is he that will harm you, if," &c. The interrogation implies a vehement negation. "Who is he?" None will do it, nay, indeed none can do it; either they will be overcome and convinced by your good deeds, or, if not, should they go on doing their worst, it will be but some outward prejudice; they may do much against you, but it will be no real detriment when all things are cast up. You may meet with difficulties and discouragements, with disturbances and divertisements; yet, when all is summed up together, in the conclusion it will appear that you are no losers. Let your persecutors do what they will, mind you your work; it will be the best course that you can take to keep on in the path of piety, for there will be your security.

Doctrine.—The way of real sanctity is really a way of safety.

Or, you may add, as being somewhat more agreeable to the coherence; in suffering times, the way of real sanctity is really a way of safety.

We shall endeavour to prosecute the observation,

First, By way of explication. And here our province will be, to open the nature of this real sanctity, or holiness, which is the same. And observe there are two descriptions of holiness, both of which are requisite. The one in the principle, this is in the heart. The other in the practice, this is in the life. There is holiness in the root, and holiness in the fruit.* The first is necessary to the second; for that which is not, cannot act; there must be a principle, else how should there be any operations? and the second is necessary, as a proof and discovery of the former.

1. There must be holiness in the principle.

There must be a real thorough change, wrought in the soul by divine grace. The understanding must be enlightened, the will renewed, and a peace concluded between God and the soul; no less will serve your turn. If a man be not alive, how can he walk? It is not to be expected. There must be spiritual life, or else how should there be spiritual acts: for every tree brings forth fruit after its kind, both in a natural and spiritual sense. Can any one imagine, that they who are spiritually asleep, yea, dead in trespasses and sins, should run in the ways of God's commands, and that with an enlargedness of heart? Whilst a person is in his old frame, a captive to Satan, a stranger to God, he has not got into this way, and how then should he walk in it?

2. There must be holiness in the practice.

This is the exercise of the former principle in the life and conversation, this springs from the other, and is a manifestation of it, and these must go together. Those things which we own, believe, and possess, must appear to the world for the conviction of beholders. We must do works which may be seen, though not that they may be seen. Christianity is more than a notion, or a nice speculation.

We are far from decrying practical godliness; though our holiness be not that for which we are justified, yet it is that without which we shall not be saved. This is the way both to glorify God, and to be glorified by him: and he that is endeavouring to find out a nearer way to heaven, is but labouring in vain; yea, he is industriously at work to destroy himself. It is necessary that thou have the root of the matter in thee, and this manifested by the fruits of new obedience. A principle of holiness there must be in the heart, and the practice of it in thy life; these the Lord hath joined together in those

* In actu primo, et in actu secundo.

that belong to him, and he is no good man that puts them asunder. So that you may take this account of our sanctity, that holiness, (as it is in us) consists in our complete conformity to the Holy One. Godliness is God-likeness.

This conformity unto God is two-fold.

First, Our holiness includes a conformity to the nature of God. We must be holy as God is holy ; though we cannot be equally so, according to our sphere and finite capacity ; an equal degree of purity is beyond our reach, and therefore not enjoined. God is the Holy One by way of eminency, far surpassing both men and angels. He is essentially holy, we but participatively so ; it is but a quality in us, it is essence in him. He is holy effectively, for he makes others so ; now this, as to us, is impossible ; men may be made instrumental to convey holiness, but they cannot bestow it by a proper efficiency : this appertains not to a created, but a creating power ; yet we must have the same kind of holiness. A copy may have the likeness of the original, though there be not the same perfection ; so, though believers have not an equal degree of holiness with God, yet they may be like him.

Believers are said to be partakers of the divine nature ; namely, as they resemble God in his attributes. When we are patient, merciful, just, faithful, true, loving as God is, we shew forth the divine attributes unto the world. Hereby God becomes, (as it were) visible in man, when we show forth the virtues of him, “who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.” We must resemble him in his affections. When we love what God loves, when we hate what God hates, when what pleaseth God pleaseth us also, when what provokes his Spirit provokes ours : this is holiness in us, as it is in conformity to his nature.

Secondly, Our holiness requires that there be a conformity to the will of God. The will of God is the rule of holiness, as his nature is the pattern of it ; and there is no more of holiness in any work, than there is of the will of God in it. David as a holy man, is described by both these in Acts xiii. 22, “A man after my own heart ;” there is conformity to the nature of God : “who shall fulfil all my will ;” there is conformity to his will. The result of both is holiness. So our conformity to God, is our imitation of him, and by our walking with him we make him our pattern, and his will our rule. If we walk in the way of holiness, we regulate ourselves, and all that we do according to the divine laws, not consulting secular interest or what carnal reason would suggest, but what says the Lord in such and such a case ? how runs the will of the Great King ? what say the statutes of heaven, in this and the other matter ?

When others inquire what says such a neighbour, and such a friend? the good man goes and consults the sacred oracles: his question is, what says God?

This conformity to the will of God is,

1. To what God wills not to be done, respecting what is sinful in conduct.

We must maintain the power of holiness in combating with sin; we must not meddle with it on any account, either greater or less; we must abstain from all appearance of evil. Thou dost not spend thy time in gratifying the sensitive part, in "making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," as some do; thou dost not run with them to their excess of riot; thou art no drunkard, no adulterer, no reviler, no extortioner, nor unjust, &c. &c. it may be, no saint either for all that: it is possible it may be so, look to it, that it be not really so. It is not enough to be free from gross pollutions, we must labour to keep conscience clear, that the bird in the breast may be always singing. The foolish pleasure of a vain world must not charm and allure us; we must keep ourselves unspotted, having nothing to do with the unfruitful works of darkness; for our unholiness arises from our conformity, or adhesion to those things which are unclean, and unholy. We should consider whether such a thing we are about to meddle with, be lawful or not; and whether it be expedient or not, at such a time, in such a place, with such company, for such a one, &c. &c. and rather deny ourselves than offend others. We must maintain our ground in a vigorous resistance, and be waging war with sin every day, endeavouring by all possible methods and prescribed means to get rid of it. Be laying at the root of sin every day, not only now and then, when corruptions stir somewhat more than ordinary; for if they get strength again, thou hast new work. The heart must be cleansed from sin, and filled with grace, and this exercised and evidenced in the life; that will be the way to maintain the power of holiness.

2. Our holiness includes a conformity to the will of God, in what he wills to be done: and this respects our performance of duties. These duties are,

(1.) Such as belong to God.

Public duties of religion; holiness is inclusive of these: they that would be found walking in the way of real sanctity, must be careful to attend upon God in the public ordinances of his appointment, and institution. Surely this is one part of a holy life, to seek God where he may be found; we must wait on him in the solemn assembly, there doth he usually meet his people and bless them; those that go to meet him there do not

usually lose their labour, unless it be through their own negligence and inadvertency.

Private duties of religion belong to the way of real sanctity: we mean those which are kept up in families. Our holiness must appear, not only in God's house, but also in our own; those that live together, should serve God together. Our houses should be houses for God, nurseries of religion. There, those that are heads and governors are concerned mostly, though not only. Alas! it is matter of lamentation, that so many families are schools for Satan, where nothing is to be heard but wickedness, that there are so many families where God is not called upon.

Secret duties of religion must be performed by those who would walk in the way of holiness. There are prayer, meditation, and heart examination, which must be looked after in secret. Many duties a pious person has to perform, that none must be privy to but God and his own soul. He has much work alone; there he must look into his own heart, there he must look up to God to fetch down blessings from above.

And here take notice of one thing, these duties must all be performed, one as well as another; we must not pick and choose those only that are suited to our humours; we need all the help heaven-ward that we can get: we often need refreshing and strengthening in our journey, and if we neglect to draw near to God in some duties, no wonder if he withdraw from us in others. It may be, sometimes, thou wantest God's company in the solemn assembly; public ordinances are empty cisterns, thou dost find little or no advantage from them, there is little savour in the word, it doth not come warmly to thy heart; it may be, God had not thy company in the morning; thou wantest his presence in public, he did not find thee seeking him in secret upon thy knees, and therefore withdraws. So again in the evening, thou hast been negligent in thy public attendances, and when thou waitest on him in thy secret addresses, thou art left to thyself. If we would have God to meet us in one duty, we must wait on him in all, or else it will be more than we have any ground to expect if he meet us in any appointment.

(2.) Such as belong to man.

The duties of our relations, belong to the way of sanctity.

Much of the power of God lies within doors; the noise and stir we may make about religion amongst others, will signify little, if those that are with us every day, and have opportunity to know us best, speak least of our holiness. He that is really holy, is concerned conscientiously to discharge relative duties. There are some who talk at a great rate abroad about religion, but they do not walk regularly at home. They that are more

sincere and industrious, seldom make a great noise about what they do ; it is not usual for them to sound the trumpet of their own praise. Relative duties must be regarded, as well as those that relate to God, more immediately.

In the duties of our particular callings and dealings in the world, our holiness must appear. We must be "holy in all manner of conversation," for nothing is well done, that is not done religiously : we must not trade, and deal, and traffic in the world as men, but as Christians. We must be found in our particular callings, for idleness is against both reason and religion ; neither must we suffer our particular callings to interfere with what is general. Our religion must not be confined to our knees, it must be brought into our shops ; it must appear in our bargaining, buying and selling, and conversing with others. Our holiness must appear in every thing we do, in sacred things, in civil, yea, and natural too. Our eating and drinking must be according to divine direction ; we must do all things by rule. Our dressing and adorning come under scripture regulation, yea, our sleeping too ; we should be careful lest God find us in our bed, when he expects us on our knees. We might have branched these things into more particulars, but you may easily multiply them in your meditation, for our holiness must be universal. O how large and extensive is the work of a Christian ! We have but touched upon these things last mentioned, designing to press them in the application.

SERMON II.

HOLINESS THE WAY OF SAFETY.

1 PETER III. 13.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good ?

WE shall proceed in a few things further, which may serve, partly, by way of explication, giving us to understand the nature of true holiness a little better, and partly instead of application. We hope it may not be altogether unprofitable, nor

do very much injustice to the rules of method. From what has been said, it appears, that holiness is more than,

1. An enlightened head.

There must be an inward principle; so that there is something more required than an orthodox judgment, to constitute a real saint. A learned head, with an unholy heart and ungodly life, will not do. Many make a noise about religion, who, if they were really sounded to the bottom, would be found very shallow. If talking might pass for doing, if pretending to religion might go current for the practice of it, then we might find sundry who have their faces Zion-ward; but, alas! many have light in their heads, but no heat in their hearts. Some think they are far enough, if they can talk of the church, and discourse of religion in company; they have a glib tongue, and an extemporaneous wit, and they can hold an argument almost on any point in doctrine or discipline; they can plead for such a mode of administration, such a form of church-government, &c. and here you have the sum total of their evidences for heaven; though they never felt the power of divine grace overcoming their wills. Inquire of such persons about the things of nature; yea, or of scripture, as to the notional part, their answer is quick and ready: but ask them any thing of religion, where experience is concerned, to give an answer, and then they are nonplussed; you talk as strangely as Nicodemus thought Christ did, when discoursing about the great mystery of regeneration; you are got out of their element, and they are ready to say with those in Ezekiel, "Doth he not speak parables?" Or, it may be worse, with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, "What will this babblers say?" How will some poor, yet sincere Christians in their rustic coats, who in many things can scarcely speak sense, when they come to the experimental part of Christianity, puzzle and confound the profoundest doctors and rabbies of the day, notwithstanding all their sublimated notions.

Sirs, parts are not piety, whatever you may fancy; there are many learned heads in hell, and others going thither. Thou mayest dive into the intricacies of nature, and be able to give a philosophical account of most difficulties that occur; thou mayest be acquainted with the notional part of the gospel, and be able to unriddle the mysteries of salvation; thou mayest have the bible in thy head, so as to command every verse almost at thy finger's end; thou mayest be admired for thy acquirements and attainments, the trumpet of thy fame may be sounded through the country where thou livest, and yet thou mayest be a learned ignoramus, and go with a lighted candle in thy hand

to hell. Many can discourse long and learnedly on the heavens, but know nothing of God in the heavens; they are quick-sighted in natural things, but in spiritual, fools. Holiness is more than,

2. Faint and feeble wishes.

There is a great deal of difference between wishings and wouldings, and doing. If some cold, faint desires, without suitable and sincere endeavours, would carry us to heaven, it would not be long before some persons were there; if a few good wishes would storm the kingdom above, we should talk no more of a holy life. But let none dream away their days with this groundless imagination, that a sick-bed's "Lord have mercy upon me!" Or a Balaam's "O that I might die the death of the righteous!" will carry their souls into eternal bliss. Oh! how dull and stupid are many in the great business of eternity, and loth to stir; yet they can wish as well as any, and if that would suffice, they would not be sparing; words are cheap, and we might have enow of them. Their usual language is,* O that this were working! O that they had grace! O that they could live as such, or such! Whereas they never endeavour to do it. Sometimes upon their miscarriages you shall hear a heartless petition, God forgive me! upon some surprising and unexpected news of danger, then, God bless us! But according to their usage it is so far from being prevalent, that it is really a taking God's name in vain. Faint and feeble desires, without any impression of holiness upon the heart and expression of it in the life, will leave the soul in horror at last: those that are cold wishers and woulders, but will not be workers, must burn in a hot hell. The way to heaven is up hill, and requires pains; there must be active and unwearied diligence, or else we fall short: whereas it is an easy matter to tumble down into perdition. Holiness is more than,

3. Mere morality.

Holiness and harmlessness are really two distinct things. Morality is of use, as far as it goes, and it is to be desired that there were more of it in the world, yet it is not sufficient. It is to be feared this will be the bane of many souls, they have lived soberly and honestly in the world, they mean nobody any harm, and yet are going but a more smooth and unsuspected way to everlasting misery. Thou must get further than thy good meanings, or else thou art as near to heaven as ever thou art like to be. Thou sayest thou meanest well; but I say, good meaners are but meanly good. Thou dost not shew much in thy life, but thou hast a good honest heart thou sayest: alas!

* O utinam hoc esset laborare!

thou sayest thou knowest not what, thou speakest an impossibility. It is an unjustifiable notion, yea, nothing but contradictory nonsense, to plead for the regularity of thy heart, whilst there is nothing of it in thy life; it will be as near truth to call black, white: doubtless there are many good meaners in hell, who pretended their hearts were good when on earth, however it fell out that their lives were ill. The religion of some persons runs all upon *nots*; they are *not* such and such; like their predecessor the boasting Pharisee, who for all that was disowned by Christ. Not only the unruly servant, that beat his fellow-servants, is cast into hell, but the false servant too that did not improve his talent; he did not make his talent away, he gave the Lord his own, and yet, because he did not improve it, he is called an unprofitable servant, and sentenced to depart as such. A negative righteousness will not do; it will not be enough at the last day, to say, Lord, we have done no hurt in the world, for he expects that we should do some good. Holiness is more than,

4. Flourishing formality.

This is something more than the former, yet short still. All are not saints that seem to be so; there may be, and too often is, the form of godliness where persons deny the power of it; yea, all the religion of too many, is but a formal, lifeless thing. A little they do for fashion's sake; but they are far from making it their main business, and the grand concern of their lives. Some persons' holiness is only a little knack they have got, not that they matter it at all, only they would not be branded by their neighbours, with the black ignominious mark of being irreligious. Some are Christians because christianity hath been handed to them from their ancestors, and they can give no reason why they are so, but because they were brought up so. Ask them why they are of such a religion; well, because their father was of that persuasion, and so was their grandfather, and all their ancestors, as far as they can remember. They are heirs to their father's religion, as they are to his estate, and so it descends to posterity, and passes from one generation to another, being handed down by tradition; this comes far short of what the Lord requires. These mere formalists are usually for the religion of the state, that which is uppermost and most in vogue, having a desire to be in the fashion in one thing as well as another: thus are the times, and therefore thus are we. Others do thus, and we are resolved we will not be branded for schismatics, they shall never have that to cast in our teeth; we will keep our church, and mind our prayers, and we do not question but that we shall do as well as

any precise zealots that make such a stir about religion. "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we;" our church hath appointed such and such things, and they inquire no further. It is indeed a dismal consideration to think how many there are who go under the name of Protestants, who think themselves good Christians and you shall undergo the lash of their censures if you do not think so too, who get not a jot further than a little flourish in religion, a little painted holiness they have to entertain the eyes of the beholders, that they may not see their deformity; and that is all they have, but not all that is required. Holiness is more than,

5. Hypocritical pretences.

Hypocrites pretend to greater strictness in religion than those last mentioned, but they miss it in their aims and designs; they do not what they do from a right principle and for right ends. It is real sanctity we have been speaking about; now that of the hypocrite is but counterfeit, and observe,* counterfeit piety is double iniquity. Great is the difference between a real saint and a hypocrite; though outwardly you can scarcely distinguish them, nay, it may be, the hypocritical pretender in some external performances, shall outdo him who is a real worshipper. See him in his holiday's dress, and you would really think he is a saint, and yet it is but a more cunning artifice he has in duties than his neighbour: it may be the devil hath faster hold on such than many others. How many of us belong to this number, and who they are, the Lord only knows. There are many who are willingly brought to the outworks of religion, that take little pains with their hearts; most they do is to be seen of men, and, "verily they have their reward." Many who will read and pray, and hear and perform many duties, especially such as come under others' observation, whose hearts are not right with God; they bow to Christ in compliment, with cap and knee, but are not ready to do what he commands. A hypocrite may pray neatly, orderly, and fluently, and yet not believingly and experimentally; yea, it is possible he may pray himself into hell. Holiness is more than,

6. An intermitting zeal in religion.

This is that which is opposite to a uniform, regular, steady walking. Some will needs be religionists, and walk in the way of holiness, but they are not orderly in their steps; sometimes they run, sometimes they stand, they have many and long intermissions, as persons in some distempers, they have their hot and cold fits; sometimes a feverish heat, sometimes an aguish coldness. O! what a fever-burning zeal for religion some-

* *Simulata sanctitas est duplex iniquitas.*

times, at other times, they can scarcely afford it a good word. Holiness, in the power of it, doth not consist of such ups and downs. It is true, an honest, sincere heart may be out of frame; but though the stream be muddy, yet there is a spring that will cleanse it in due time. If we would walk holily, we must walk regularly; it is not sufficient to keep up a round of religious duties, and think we may do what we please betwixt times, as though when we had been on our knees begging pardon for our sins, we had paid off the old score and might boldly run on a new one. What, pray against sin, and go immediately and sin against our prayers! O daring hypocrisy! Oh, to see a person on God's day, in the solemn assembly, with his hands and eyes up to heaven, wrestling with God for a blessing; another while his eyes fixed on, and, as it were, chained to the minister, catching at every word as it is delivered, and, within a few minutes, to hear the same person, as soon as he is got out of the door, talking idly and vainly, as though he had not been at ease for the want of such an opportunity; yea, and within a few days to see him drinking with the drunken, dishonouring God's name by his notorious sinful practice along with Satan's agents;—this is very sad! Oh, that those eyes which are one while reading God's book, inquiring into the words of eternal life, then trickling down tears in weeping for sin; that they should be another while employed in reading the devil's books, and such as were contrived by hellish policy, and after that gazing on vanity;—this is grievous! Oh, that those tongues, which are heard confessing sin, speaking of it with sighs and emphatical groans, as though the heart were almost ready to break with such depressing, debasing, soul-humbling expressions, as if they would not sin for a world, and another time melodiously singing forth the divine praises; that these should be the week following, blaspheming God's name by their full-mouthed oaths and horrid execrations; that these instruments should be employed to condemn God's ordinances, and vilify his servants,—this is matter of lamentation! Oh, to seem serious on God's day, importunately begging for their soul's salvation, and soon after imprecating their own damnation; raking in the wounds of Christ, enough to make one's ears tingle;—this is exceedingly dreadful! This is not walking in the way of holiness. Holiness is more than,

7. A temporary profession of christianity.

More might easily have been added, as federal holiness, being baptized in infancy, godly education, church privileges, convictions for, and confessions of sin, a partial reformation, &c. Real sanctity is more than these; but we cannot stay to insist upon them.

Our holy walking doth imply constancy. Some flourish a little while, and not having root, they wither away, especially when they meet with the scorching days of persecution. One while, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;" the next news, it may be, we hear of them is, they have turned their backs upon the ways of God, and side with the ungodly multitude. One while, "Hosannah to the Son of David;" within a very little while, by the louder cry of their lives and conversation, "Let him be crucified, let him be crucified." One while, own Christ; another while, "Away with him, away with him, we will not have this man, but Barabbas;" not those duties and ordinances, but these lusts, follies, and vanities. This is a going backward, not walking on, for that implies progress and continuation; they that would be said to walk holily, must be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." It is not enough to begin, go on a little, and then give up; they that are holy must be holy still, not begin in the spirit and end in the flesh, for no grace will be saving, but that which is persevering. A temporary flash and no more, like a vapour that is soon in and soon out, is not the way to be found in the path of safety, and to be preserved when sufferings and afflictions come; no, it is the readiest way to bring these upon us. There is no putting our hands to the plough, no engaging in christianity and then giving up, that will carry us to glory; he that expects the prize must run to the end; he that would be crowned must fight on till he hath gained the victory; no cowards that turn again when they meet with difficulties, have any ground to expect the reward which is promised to all those who overcome.

Our holiness must appear at all times, in all places, in all cases and companies; nothing can be a sufficient plea for verging to a compliance with sin. Every duty should be looked after in its place, and we have work enough to fill up all our time, for the commandment is exceeding broad." It is not enough that thou servest God on his own day, if thou dost gratify thyself all the week after; it is not enough that thou prayest in thy family, or in thy closet in the morning, or in both, if thou keepest the devil's company all the day following. Some on a Lord's day evening put off all their religion with their better clothes, and think what they have done will serve for the next week, though what they did was very meanly too; whereas they should but learn on God's day how to serve him afterwards. Our holiness is walking with God, as Enoch did; a following him fully, as did Caleb; yea, with Zacharias and Elizabeth, "a walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless:" it is serving God uprightly, orderly, regularly,

uniformly, constantly, in a diligent discharge and faithful performance of every appointed duty.

Having explained holiness, another thing in the explication is to shew, what that safety is, to which holiness is the way.

1. It is the way to temporal safety.

This is the way to be freed from outward sufferings, or to be preserved under them. Sometimes God's people are not free from a day of trouble, yet they are preserved under the troubles of the day. When the sea of the world hath been tossed with waves by tempestuous storms, when all things have been unhinged and unsettled, both in church and state, when affairs have been involved and miserably confused in this lower region, though the righteous did not wholly escape such tumultuous distractions, yet they have been kept under them; yea, and inwardly supported so as many did not suppose. Sometimes saints are under sufferings from God, sometimes from men. The Lord doth sometimes lay his hand upon his people and visit them with the rod, yet the other hand is underneath them to bear them up; in this he designs their advantage, to reclaim them from their wanderings, and prevent their going astray for the future. The Lord knows what his poor servants are, and what they can bear, and he treats them accordingly. He that made us, knows our mould, that we are but dust, and cannot bear the stroke of his arm without the auxiliary assistance of his Holy Spirit; therefore when he doth debate, it is in measure, and though the body may suffer, yet if the soul be bettered, what reason is there to find fault? If he do empty us from vessel to vessel, yet if he fill us with his grace; though he do remove comforts, yet if he come in himself and take up his abode with us, we are safe still, and have no reason to repent our waiting on him. Sometimes they are under sufferings from men, it is a day of trouble and rebuke, as in Hezekiah's time, "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." It is sometimes a stormy day of persecution, and the instruments of Satan are a little let loose by God's permissive providence, and his servants are hunted as partridges upon the mountains; yet even then the Lord doth wonderfully preserve them; and though they may suffer and lose something for him, they shall lose nothing by him; the sons of violence may so far prevail as to take them off the stage of mortality, yet then there is,

2. Eternal safety.

The Lord lodges them in heaven, and doubtless that, if any, is a place of safety. When the Lord removes them hence, and houses them with himself they are out of danger, and then there is no ground of fear; for who shall scale the walls of the

New Jerusalem, to disturb those that have ascended thither? Yet do not mistake here, though holiness be the way to eternal safety, the path appointed by the Lord for his people by which to reach heaven, yet it is not for your holiness, as the procuring cause, that you must go thither. Alas! when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants, and it is not possible for us to merit any thing at the hand of God. We must not overlook the righteousness of Christ, he is said to be the way, and none come to the Father but by the Son; and holiness is said to be the way too, for without it none shall see the Lord, yet in different respects; Christ is the way of merit, purchase, and procurement, and holiness the way of means, preparatory meetness, and fitness for heaven; Christ's righteousness and ours have their distinct offices, and both the way in some respects. We have our reconciliation with God, and security from his wrath, by the blood of Christ, and inward peace of conscience from the evidence of our sanctification; yet some, though they pretend to have renounced popery, talk of earning heaven. Ask them how they expect to be saved? Well, by their good works. They think that those who do so and so, shall not surely fall short of heaven at last; if they do, what will become of others more loose and careless than themselves? And so they forget the merits of the Lord Jesus, never considering his procurement of our acceptance with God.

Secondly, The confirmation of the doctrine, and here we shall endeavour to prove,

I. That the way of real sanctity is a way of safety.

1. From scripture assertions and expressions. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely," Prov. x. 9. Many politicians can invent ways, as they imagine, to secure themselves, yet when they have done all, honesty will be found to be the best policy. "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me," Psal. xxv. 21. Righteousness is called a breast-plate, for its security. A breast-plate preserves the principal part of the body. A man may lose a leg or an arm, and not lose his life; but a stab at the heart is mortal: so righteousness and holiness preserve the principal part of a Christian, his soul and conscience.

2. From scriptural instances. Many such we find upon record in holy writ, that let us see how the Lord hath signally and seasonably appeared for his people, when in great straits and amidst threatening difficulties. We shall mention a few among many that might be named. Such was the wickedness of the old world, that the Lord deluged it with a flood of water, and there Noah, a preacher of righteousness, is preserved in

the ark when others are swept away. Such was the abounding sin of Sodom, that the Lord destroyed it with fire and brimstone from heaven ; but righteous Lot must be first fetched out and set without the city : destruction must not come upon it so long as he remained there.

Famous are those two instances in Daniel, and very pertinent to our purpose. See that in the third chapter. A decree goes forth from the king, that whoever did not fall down and worship the golden image which he had set up, should be cast into the burning fiery furnace. Hard measure indeed, it was come to this—they must either turn or burn ; yea, and says proud, blasphemous Nebuchadnezzar, “Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands ?” Oh what insulting arrogance ! as though he had been the great controller and commander of the world. What ! out of his hands ? as if man, a worm, was able to grapple with divine vengeance ! Yet notwithstanding his great words and daring insolence, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, are not affrighted. Blessed nonconformists ! they are partly as bold as he, though in a better sense ; the goodness of their cause helps them to courage. They firmly believe the Most High was above him, and they do not much demur or dispute the point, but are resolved, come what will, they will obey God rather than man : “Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” O heroic, and generous faith ! triumphing in the face of danger, yea, what was most likely, in the face of death ! The king’s command is executed ; these three Dissenters are thrown in, and not only so, but the furnace is heated seven times hotter too ! The enemies of God would burn his people in hell, if they could, yet the Lord doth preserve them safe in such burnings.

The other is that of Daniel himself, chap. vi. We have an account of a desperate plot that was on foot against Daniel, when he was advanced to a high place, being preferred above the presidents and princes, because “an excellent spirit was found in him.” They envy him and would gladly throw him out of place and favour, and they have their diabolical devices and cabals to bring this about. They first seek occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, thinking to find some misdemeanor or irregular management of matters there ; then they would have a plausible plea to endeavour his ejection : but all their expectations are frustrated, forasmuch as he was conscientiously faithful, “neither was there any error or fault found in him.” Their hopes being blasted this way, another

project comes into their heads ; for what will not the devil help his agents to do ? They now despair of accomplishing their designs, unless they find occasion against him concerning the law of his God. This seeming to be the most likely expedient, they contrived, as one says, an act of uniformity, forbidding by an unalterable law, to ask a petition of any god or man, but of the king, for the space of thirty days, upon pain of death ; no less penalty would serve them, designing to be rid of such a factious, obstinate fellow, as they accounted Daniel to be. This was agreed upon, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not, so that there is no dispensing with it ; now he that will dare to be disobedient must die for it. They thought that he who prayed so often, would not refrain seeking God for thirty days, and they were not mistaken ; for though he knew that the writing was signed against him, yet he kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks to his God, as he did aforetime ; as he did before, so he doth still, he keeps on his course, not baulking his devotion though his life was at stake. They watch him, and found him praying and making supplication to his God. They throw him into the den of lions according to their established law, yet the lions' mouths are stopped by an angel sent from God, and Daniel is as safe there as he was before.—See hence how safe it is to be found waiting on God in a way of duty, not turning aside for fear of men, notwithstanding their big looks and swelling words. We should not decline duty, though the performance of it should be attended with hazard. Some, it may be, are ready to think that there is more danger in our day, Daniel's being an extraordinary case, and that now no such miracles are to be expected. It is true, that was a signal and extraordinary appearance of God in his providence, yet we have seen the point proved also,

3. From our own experience. God is the same that he was formerly, and he has the wonted love for his people that he had heretofore ; his hand is not shortened that he cannot save ; his wisdom is not yet nonplussed, and never shall be ; omnipotence has not acted to the very uttermost. A variety of instances might be given, that show how God has been pleased to step in for the relief of his servants ; how he has appeared in the mount of difficulty and extremity since old testament times, yea, in our day. Have not some of us seen a copy written after that original in the case of Daniel ? It may be not so terrible, yet some can very well remember how the servants of God, who durst not sin against him, nor disown what they judged to be his will, have been thrown into dungeons and prisons, for acting ac-

cording to their light; they were shut up in dismal cells of darkness, in years not long since past; though, by earnest prayer and diligent searching into those things, they endeavoured to get the best information they could. In some things the case was not much unlike. Men in power found fault with them, as with Daniel, relative to their God, proposing, yea, imposing what in conscience they could not comply with, and because they would not, or rather could not conform to those things which they set up, they must be liable to the lash of anti-scriptural penalties. We grant they did not bind them, as the other did Daniel, not to petition God at all, yet it must be according to their mode: worship God any way else, and they were railed at as schismatics, and prosecuted as rioters, when those that were really so escaped without condign punishment. But, blessed be the name of our God, it is not so now, those storms are blown over, being succeeded by a sunshine calm! and though some have said, they would either starve them or damn them; yet we find, through the goodness of God, that they were under a mistake, and we have lived to see that their laws were not like those of the Medes and Persians which altered not. We find it proved by scripture and backed by experience, that it is best to be, and do, and suffer what God would have us: and though his servants and subjects may meet with hardships, yet in due time he will clear up their innocence, and the names of noble patriots that have stood up for the cause of God, and the interest of Christ, in a degenerate age, shall not always be followed with the nicknames of traitor and rebel. Consider,

II. Wherefore holiness is the way of safety.

1. Because real saints have God for their guardian.

The Lord is with his people as long as they are with him. Of whom then should they be afraid that have such a one to protect them? If he be for them, who shall be against them? "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are safe," Prov. xviii. 10. The great God, the God of the armies of Israel, is able to defend them, and he will do it; hence it is that he hath bid them not to be afraid: "Fear not, O Jacob, though thou passest through the waters and through the fire, I will be with thee;" and his presence with any, surely doth bespeak their safety; none need question but that he will be as good as his word, for "he is faithful who hath promised." God's people are safe, so long as he reigns in heaven, and rules all their enemies, both in hell and on earth; though they may meet with storms and tempests, yet there is shelter for them in the chamber of his attributes. Infinite wisdom shall be at work to counsel and direct them. The Lord governs the world, and

orders all things by his providence, and will so dispose of matters, you may be sure, as shall not be to the real detriment of those that belong to him. The Lord will overmatch all his enemies, and make their oracles to speak but folly. His power also shall be employed to protect and defend his people, and whoever destroys them must ask God leave; he will baffle all the attempts of his enemies in his due time. All the malicious combinations of the hellish fraternity shall be frustrated; all their daring enterprizes shall be labour in vain; it is not possible that they should ever enervate omnipotence. God is greater than all, and none shall ever pluck his people out of his hand. The Lord hath taken charge of them, he hath bound himself to them by promise, and rather than fail he will work wonders for them. His angels he employs for their safety; they are all "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation;—and the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him." Though saints be the objects of hell's envy, and earth's malice, yet they are God's darlings, and angels' charge. The believer may argue from all God's relations to him. He is my God, my King, my Father, my Husband, therefore he will take care of me; this may well be the inference from such premises; certainly believers may be well assured, that so long as God keeps the throne, so long they shall not want what may be for their good.

2. Because all harm shall turn to the saints' good.

"And we know, that all things shall work together for good," &c. Rom. viii. 28: it is not some uncertain and improbable report, no, we know it; so the apostle saith elsewhere, "All is yours;" a large and comfortable word indeed, *all*, whatever they be, all afflictions, trials, adverse providences, shall end well; so that whatsoever a saint meets with, he will be no loser in the end. "All things work together for good;" take a wicked man and all things are against him: but it is not so here, they work for good, not some only, but all, comforts and crosses, mercies and judgments. Some may think their troubles and persecutions will not, and are ready to say, can any good come out of these? yes, these also come into the number. In such times and by such means their corruptions are mortified, and their graces are brightened; their trouble will be introductive of their triumph. We are short-sighted creatures, we cannot oftentimes understand the design of divine providences, and therefore are prone to misinterpret them; when things go not as we would have them, we are ready to say, all these are against us, when God is intending us great spiritual advantage.

Thou dost not now see the reason of such sharp and severe

dealings, thou canst not spell out the meaning of such variety of afflictions and dark providences, but thou shalt be able. Thou art ready to repine and be uneasy, but in heaven, however, thou shalt see what it was for; thou shalt then understand wherefore such a rod was sent, such an ache, such a pain, such a distemper; and why at such a time, and why it continued so long, and why in such a degree; yea, and that thou couldst not have been well without it; that it was better ordered, than if it had been at thy disposal, yea better than if all the angels in heaven had had the ordering of it. Set this down with thyself, that nothing but sin can really hurt thee; other things may bring some outward disadvantage, but no real detriment. So much may be implied in that, "fear not them that can kill the body, but have no more that they can do;" if that be all, if then they have done their worst, fear them not.

We might have insisted here much more largely, and shown that those things cannot hurt us which are most likely to do it, as assaults of Satan, persecutions of wicked men, afflictions, death, hell, &c. but we shall reserve them to another place.

SERMON III.

HOLINESS THE WAY OF SAFETY.

1 PETER III. 13.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

WE shall now pass on to the application, which will consist,
First, Of sundry inferences and uses.

1 *Inference*, If the way of holiness be really a way of safety, then there is such a thing as real sanctity.

It is true, it is that which by many is laughed at and derided; and some look upon real holiness as no more than a melancholy imagination, or the fantastic delusion of men in a dream. Hence it is that they ridicule it almost in every company, and make it the subject of their merriment, by this means proclaim-

ing their own folly ; yea, some can boast that at last they are got from under the bondage of that tyrant conscience, as if they had had many struggles and conflicts, and at last with much ado had got the victory. Atheism is at a great height in this our day. Some there are that have attained such a prodigious height in wickedness, that they search diligently into the law of the land, to know how far they may venture in sin, and not come within the lash of it. An unseen world, a state of immortality beyond the grave, are what they laugh at ; and those that thus believe, think that they shall cease to be when they cease to breathe ; they cannot remember any thing they did before they came into this world, and they think it shall be so when they take their leave of it. O how far is the human race gone ! How is man sunk by his apostacy ! The present age affords too many instances of those that live, as if there were no God to punish, no hell to torment, no heaven to reward ; as if they expected no life after this, saying that religion is only a political cheat, which men of parts have invented to affright persons and keep the world in awe. But the time is coming when such will be convinced of their folly, when they shall see clearly how they have been deceived, for in hell there will be no atheists, then they will believe there is a God, because of finding themselves under the sad effects of his justice : but dreadful will it be, not to believe the being of hell but by being in it.

2 *Infer.* Then it is not in vain to serve the Lord.

Some are ready to reproach and vilify religion, and say there is nothing got by it ; why should we wait on the Lord any longer ? “ What is the Almighty that we should serve him ? and what profit, if we should pray to him ? ” Job xxi. 15. They reckon they may as well give it up ; what hath it profited them to have walked mournfully before the Lord ? others that regard no such thing, prosper as well every whit as they, and it may be better. Whereas the fault is not in religion, but because they are not more religious ; it is for want of sincerity and integrity, that careless pretenders find no more advantage by waiting on God. Though a blind man do not see the sun, it doth not thence follow that there is no such thing in the firmament ; others see it and feel its warming, reviving influences. Though formal, hypocritical pretenders to christianity find little or no savour in the things of God, though they do not taste and experience that sweetness, which is to be found in wisdom’s ways ; yet it is not safe to conclude that none do, for some can say, there is no such pleasure to be found in all the world, as there is in communion with God.

Thou hast served God, thou sayest so many years, thou hast

attended on ordinances and canst not tell that thou art any better than thou wast; more shame for thee, the fault is thine own, it is because of thy negligence, carelessness, and hypocrisy; thou hast not been sincere and in good earnest, but halving it in religion, serving God one while and the world another, and then no wonder thou hast found so little good. Others have sought the Lord and found him; they can say, silence all your censures, ye that are so free in charging religion; speak not so atheistically, ye wicked ones, for I can tell you from good and sufficient grounds, that God doth deal familiarly with men; his comforts have many a time delighted my soul; I have sought him in times of difficulty, he has appeared for me and set my feet in a large place; I have no reason to repent my waiting on him, nay, I have abundant reason for thankfulness that ever I did so.

It is true, sometimes, saints are in the dark and are ready to say, they "have cleansed their hands in vain:" yet the sun shines again when the storm is blown over. Is it in vain to serve the Lord? Let the three children speak, who experienced such a wonderful preservation whilst they kept in his way. Let Daniel speak, who was kept in the lion's den: and many others we read of in holy writ. Those triumphant songs of joy and praise, that shall be eternally warbled out in the regions above, by that celestial choir, are proofs of this, that it is not in vain to serve the Lord: those that have gone by holiness to happiness, who shall be trumpeting forth their hallelujahs with God in glory, do clearly shew what we have in hand. Surely none serve God in vain, but those that serve him vainly. Indeed such is the degeneracy of the present age, that to be accounted a holy person is almost a reproach. Persons may be as loose, profane, debauched as they will; drunkards, sabbath breakers, and what not, and this is no disgrace; nay, these are they that are admired and cried up as good fellows, and the only good company. But if one pray in his family, dare not sin so as others do, he is ridiculed; and what needs so much stir? Do they think that nobody must go to heaven but such precise zealots? Seriousness they account sourness; godly sorrow is but melancholy sighing; faith is but a fancy: and with such harangues, sometimes they divert their brethren in iniquity, declaiming against religion and the professors of it. The day is coming, and it is not far off, which will convince such persons of their fatal mistake, when they will find that strictness in religion was not more ado than needs.

3 *Infer.* Then the way of impiety is really unsafe.

This follows by the rule of contraries. The way of sin is

the most dangerous path in the world ; no such peril as in serving the devil. Sinners have more reason to be afraid than others : for what can they expect who have God for their enemy ? his face is set against them that do wickedly. The ungodly part of the world are ever in danger of temporal judgments, yea, and eternal too. Whilst they remain in that state, they are obnoxious to the wrath of God, it hangs over their heads continually, and they have nothing to shield them from his fiery indignation. Ungodly men are walking upon the very brink of the pit of destruction, and, if they look not well about them, they will ere long fall in ; there are but a few steps between them and death ; a little further, and they are swallowed up in everlasting perdition : and if this be safe, judge ye. Alas ! how many are dreaming in their fool's paradise, who reckon all is well, act as though nothing ailed them, and yet their case is extremely dangerous : they are safe neither for this life nor the next ; of which afterwards.

4 *Infer.* Then for real saints to be immoderately depressed with the slavish fear of men, is groundless and unaccountable.

We find that those who have waited on the Lord, and kept close to him, have been preserved when their enemies have most vehemently raged against them, and this is some encouragement, that what hath been may be again : that God, who hath often delivered, can do so again. Thy enemies are high, and therefore thy spirit, it may be, is low ; they are threatening and telling what they will do "they will pursue, overtake, and divide the spoil." But it must be, whether the Most High, who rules the world, will or not ; for he can easily break their power, infatuate their counsels, overturn all their hellish policies, and scatter their diabolical contrivances. Cheer up, then, thy drooping and desponding spirit ; the Lord, whose throne is in heaven, will "preserve the souls of his saints," and he "will be with them in trouble."

It is a dishonour to God, and a disparagement to his attributes, to be unreasonably afraid of men, Isa. li. 12, 13.—See the place. To fear man is to forget God. We should not be careless and secure, fancying that God will deliver us, when we are no way concerned about our duty. We should have such regulated fears as may quicken us to our work ; we should have wakeful and awful apprehensions of things ; but not be so cast down, as thereby to be unfit for the duty of our day and place : it is the Lord that comforteth, as in the text last mentioned. What then if men speak proudly ? The Lord hath dealt with as great enemies as are engaged against us at this day : he humbled an exalted Pharaoh, and drowned the Egyptian host

in the midst of the waters ; he weakened the forces of blasphemous Sennacherib, destroying many thousands in one night by one angel ; he brought down the high looks of imperious and insulting Nebuchadnezzar, who arrogantly challenged the living God, when he said, “ Who is that God who shall deliver you out of my hands ? ” he made proud Belshazzar tremble, and he can as easily confound the Assyrian of our day. Where are all the great and puissant enemies of the church, that in former ages have made the world ring with their cruel barbarities ? They are gone, and others shall follow in due time. Though thou mayest meet with some sufferings from the enemy, yet so long as they cannot take away thy God, for they cannot part him and thee, thou art safe. Endeavour to get matters clear for eternity, to have things straight between God and thy soul, and some sense of this ; then thou mayest say, now would do thy worst. Indeed, an over-timorousness is very prejudicial to religion, and hardening to the wicked. When they see those that pretend to more than themselves, drooping and dejected, will they not say, where is now their living by faith ? Where are now those joys and supporting assistances of the Spirit they were wont to talk of ? Whatever they pretended, yet when it comes to the trial, they are but like their neighbours. What signifies their religion, which will not now bear them up in a time of hazard and calamity ? This is their way of arguing, judging and concluding from the practice, not from the principle.

5 *Infer.* Then to promote reformation, and the practice of serious godliness is the safest and wisest course, both for nations in general, and every one in particular, when enemies are high and insulting, and judgments seem to be impending.

If any thing ruin us, it will be sin ; so that reformation is the most likely means for preservation. The more righteous persons there are in any kingdom, the more likely it is to stand ; for righteous ones are the pillars of the nation : this is evident from the instance of Sodom. It is for the sake of the saints that judgments are kept off ; though they be hated and maligned by an unbelieving world. Our enemies are threatening, and God seems to be threatening too ; there is no likeliness of his turning away his wrath, if we do not turn from our sins. Many and great are our provocations, the cry of them is loud and gone up to heaven ; the power of holiness is sunk low among us ; yea, and all this when we are under such strong engagements to be the Lord's. O what hath the Lord been pleased to do for us ! He hath considered us in our low estate ; he hath rescued us, even when at the brink of destruction ; his

own arm hath brought about our salvation. But a few years ago we were fearing a flood of Popery, which seemed to be coming with a mighty force. Often hath the Lord disappointed our enemies, and yet how little have we, who pretend to be his friends, been won over to him! Doth holiness appear more in us now, when the Lord hath so obliged us, than it did before? Are there any more praying families, more praying in secret, more giving up themselves to Christ, and endeavouring to walk so as becomes the gospel? It is to be feared things are not so. Doth not this bespeak our present state to be very unsafe? Did holiness thrive and flourish more among us, could we see more real and practical godliness, not only countenanced, but vigorously promoted, we should have better grounds to hope for England's preservation and prosperity. Could we see the spirit of holiness reviving, of profaneness perishing, more zeal for God, and more love to his ways, we should be hoping to hear of the downfall of the man of sin. Reformation is the safest way for a nation, if they expect security, and so it is for particular persons. If we would not suffer with others, we must not sin with them: we must look to our duty, and then we shall deliver our own souls. Whilst we keep our way, the angels, yea, the God of angels, will keep us; fear losing your way more than any thing; for it is sin that exposes to misery.

6 *Infer.* Then it greatly concerns every soul, closely and seriously to inquire, whether or not they be of the number of real saints?

Shall we hear so much of the saint's safety, and not be concerned to know whether we are like to partake of it or not? There are some in the world, that are really the people of God, whom the Lord will protect against all the rage and malice both of hell and earth; but are we of this number? One would think, that it should be every one's immediate care to turn in upon himself, and consider how it is with him? Am I under God's special care; or, am I one of his enemies? What evidence have I to prove that I belong unto the Lord? Look into thy heart; turn over the book of thy life, and the book of God; see how the case stands. These are matters of eternal importance; a mistake is more than possible, and exceedingly dangerous. Labour to understand whether or not you are sincere; whether your pretences to piety are any more than mere pretences. Doth your holiness appear in every thing you do? Is the holy and good will of God acceptable to your souls, though you cannot rise up with like readiness to the performance of all duties? Are you for the precepts as well as the

promises? Some are only for the advantages of religion, for that which is mostly for the advancement of their secular interest and worldly grandeur; but are you for those duties that have most of self-denial in them? To perform public duties, by which you may get some reputation and come off with applause, is no great matter; to come and shew yourselves in the assembly, and seem attentive an hour or two, is no great piece of difficulty; but how stand your hearts affected to those duties, which you must perform in secret, and men never know of? Some have no religion, but what every one sees or hears: these will be self-deceivers at last. If thy heart be right with God, thou wilt have frequent business with him in secret, that thou wouldest not have the dearest friend thou hast in the world privy to.

Are you for holiness at all times, whatever may be the aspect of providence? Or, are you cautious and wary, and will venture no further than may be consistent with your worldly advantage, and so as you may easily retreat? We had need be very critical and exact; we cannot be upon too sure grounds for eternity. It will not repent thee when thou comest to die, that thou hast employed thy strength to this end. Set time apart on purpose for this work; away with the trifling impertinences of time and sense, and let thy thoughts dwell upon the great concerns thou camest into the world chiefly to secure. Art thou renewed and sanctified, or rotten at heart? Art thou really holy, or an old creature in a new creature's dress? Let not thy questions be so much, "what shall I eat and drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" but, "what must I do to be saved?" How may I get my sins pardoned, and my peace made with God? Not what clothes shall I put on? how shall I follow such a fashion? but how shall I follow the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left me an example how I ought to walk? Be not too confident of thy state: we read of some professors famous in their day, who dropt into hell at last! May it be the lot of none here.

Secondly, The subject of the text authorizes us to reprove sharply,

1. Such as are quietly satisfied in their unrenewed state.

Those that are not yet in the way of holiness, neither are concerned about it, but are under the dominion of sin, and the power of their lusts, cannot be expected to maintain the power of godliness in their lives. Where sin reigns it makes sad work; for however it may be varnished and coloured over, it will be bitterness in the end; for wickedness and wretchedness must meet: where sin goes before, punishment will follow.

How many are there in the world, in the same state they were when they first came upon the stage; and yet are very well content? They are busily following the world, loading themselves with thick clay, providing for themselves and those that shall come after them; but the durable riches and righteousness of Christ, never come under consideration: their religion is only on God's day, and but a very little then either; and so they go dreaming through the world, till at last they drop down into the grave, yea, and what is worse, into hell.

2. It reproves the close, self-deluding hypocrite.

It is real sanctity, and not a counterfeit show, which is the way to safety: so that the hypocrite is here justly reprov'd. Let not any be deceived, God is not mocked; the hypocrite though he pass long unsuspected, yea, and be well thought of, yet at last will be found out. Now he can personate a saint, and can be much in the performance of duties; we see him every Lord's day at the public assembly, and there is none more devout, there is not a more serious person in all the congregation, to look upon, than he is; and yet, take off the mask which covers his deformity, and you would not think that it was the same person. You cannot escape the accurate search of God; "there is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves: for all things are naked and opened to him, with whom we have to do:" and it is prodigious folly once to imagine, that thou shalt ever escape the righteous judgment of God; he will bring to light "every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." The Lord taketh special notice of what we do out of the sight of our fellow-creatures; this will be for the comfort of his own people, and the terror of all rotten-hearted professors.

Art thou really serious and sincere? The Lord observes and remembers all thy secret devotion, those many duties which the world never knew any thing of; and the Lord who sees in secret, will reward thee openly. It may be, thou canst sometimes get into a corner, when those of the same family know not where thou art, nor what thou art doing; there thou canst humble thyself before the Lord; there thou canst plead with him for quickening and strengthening grace; thou canst tell God what a heart thou hast, and that thou dost need his grace, and the help of his Spirit to soften it; there thou canst lament thy barrenness and unprofitableness under the means of grace, and acknowledge thy ingratitude and unkindness to the Lord Jesus Christ; there thou canst beg that God would shed abroad his love in thy heart, thou canst open thy burdened soul, and get help against thy corruptions: though men know not of

it so as to commend thee for it, yet it shall not be lost labour ; the Lord sees and he will reward thee. But it is terrible to the hypocritical pretender ; for the Lord knows that when he draws near him with his mouth, and honours him with his lips, his heart is far from him ; he knows what spiritual impurities are within, and at last, if repentance do not take place, he will lay them open before angels and men.

3. This reproves scoffers at holiness, holy things, and holy people.

If holiness be the way to safety, then surely it is not safe to laugh at it, or those that follow it. There are some who are so far from being holy themselves, that they deride and reproach those they take to be so : these are far from being in the way of sanctity. Some cannot be merry, but it must be with scripture ; if they want a little diversion, the saints must be the subject of their discourse ; they can vent their profane jests upon the word of God, this is their pastime over their cups upon the ale-bench. How ready they are with their contumelious reflections ; they have learnt their father's dialect, they are accusers of the brethren, their speech bewrays them to be Hellians. You know, that in ordinary, we can tell what countryman a person is by his speech, every country having almost a peculiar idiom : so it is here, these scoffers at religion by speaking the language of hell, let us understand whence they are. They have, it may be, a little wit, which they set off with a sort of an air in rhetorical raillery ; and O how quick and sharp when they are upon this subject ! These scoffing Ishmaelites are seated in the devil's chair, somewhat above their brethren in iniquity, as most deserving the place ; and there is less ground to hope that such persons will be savingly wrought upon, who arrive at such a height in sin as to make a mock of it, and to sport with holiness, than others. Persons are got a great way towards hell, when they mock at what is serious, and that with delight. This the Lord will visit for in his due time ; for he knows who they are that so dishonour him by reproaching those that are his.

4. This reproves such, as out of a design to be safe in times of danger, have left the ways of holiness.

There are abundance that follow Christ only for loaves, as he himself speaks. When there is something to be had, religion then hath many courtiers ; but few will turn to, yea, few that have owned it will cleave to persecuted christianity. There are many summer Christians, who seem to be forward and zealous, when backed with abundance of outward encouragements, but when these are removed, they turn their backs and you see

them no more ; in the warm sun they flourish a little, but when nipped with the winter of persecution, they wither and die. Where is the person that dares to be holy in spite of men and devils ?

If holiness be the way to safety, surely they are out of their way, that leave it with an expectation to find safety somewhere else. Some are afraid of losing their worldly substance in times of hazard and sufferings, and rather than part with that, they will venture their souls for eternity : Demas-like, they forsake the Lord, “ having loved this present world.” Sometimes it is a day of trial, and the Lord doth (as it were) say, Who is on my side ? When the tree is shaken, rotten fruit falls. We are told by our Lord himself in the parable of the sower, that such as “ receive the seed into stony places, receive the word with joy, but not having root, they endure for a while, for when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, by and by they are offended.” Is it likely to get out of the way of danger, by going out of the way of God ? When we meet with sufferings in the way of duty, they are more easily borne, and it is some support to think, that we were acting according to the will of God, as far as we could understand it ; but when we run out of the way and afflictions overtake us, and we smart for our folly, this is more close and pressing. Surely it cannot be, that they choose wisely, who incur the displeasure of the infinite God, who is a consuming fire, to avoid the consequence of man’s displeasure ? Is it not folly to run upon the point of a sword to avoid the scratch of a pin ? That is the case here.

SERMON IV.

HOLINESS THE WAY OF SAFETY.

1 PETER III. 13.

*And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of
that which is good ?*

WE now come, thirdly, to the exhortation. And here I shall address myself,

First, To sinners.

Labour for this holiness both in heart and life ; exert your utmost endeavours to get into this way of safety ; and content not yourselves in your present state and condition. Did you but really know, and thoroughly believe it, you would begin to look about : that you are not sensible of your danger, doth not at all make it less than it is ; it is exceedingly great whether you believe it or not.

We shall propose and press home some awakening motives,

1. Consider, unholy ones whilst such have no ground to expect either temporal or eternal safety.

Judgments, even in this life, do perpetually hang over their heads ; they want nothing but divine commission, and then they fall on them and seize them immediately. 'There is no outward calamity, be it ever so ill, but thou art obnoxious to it every moment, so long as in an unrenewed state ; and when it is a day of trouble and distress, what ground hast thou to hope that it shall be well with thee, so long as thou art such ? Is it any wonder if thou fall into the enemy's hand, seeing thou thyself art an enemy to God ? In a time of public calamities, and national distractions, the wicked are in the most dangerous circumstances ; when the world fails, what can they seek to for comfort, who have not a God to go unto ? And it will be no easy matter to bear up under the weight of sin, and the weight of judgment too : "What will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far ? to whom will ye flee for help ? and where will ye leave your glory ?" Though saints may stand undaunted, yet sinners have reason to tremble when they hear the sound of the trumpet, and the alarm of war.

Sinners must not expect eternal safety. It is the established decree of heaven, that "without holiness, none shall see the Lord ;" it is the unalterable resolve of the immutable God ; the unchangeable law of him who cannot lie. There is not the least door of hope for us to escape the torments of hell, unless we be changed by renewing grace : none but "the pure in heart shall see God ;" no salvation from hell for any, but those who are saved from sin ; the wicked must "be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Christ came not to save his people in, but from their sins. He is "the author of eternal salvation ;" but it is to those that believe ; and if thou art not of that number, thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter. This is the concurrent stream of the whole scripture ; nothing is more plain and more acknowledged, and yet many live as if they did not believe it ; it may be, we own that the wicked must be separated from God, but we have good thoughts of

ourselves, and do not closely weigh whether we be of that number or not. Sinners must either be brought off their old stock and ingrafted into Christ, or else have their lot assigned with those, who are weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth. There is no neutrality here, no middle place for dislodged souls; either ever with the Lord, or never there. Holiness is the only way to happiness, and we must go by grace to glory if ever we reach it.

2. Consider, unholy souls remaining such are not fit for having communion with God, either in grace or glory.

Where there is no union, there can be no communion; now that there is no union between Christ and unbelievers is without doubt: and as long as it is so, there can be no communion in duties. Whilst you are strangers to God, you can have no fellowship with him; how can they walk together that are not agreed? "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. We may attend with others in the most sacred ordinances, and yet have no communion with God there. An unholy heart hath no dealing with God in his appointments; he comes and goes, and meets with no spiritual refreshments; he finds nothing of the sweet, soul-transporting communications of divine grace, that some others enjoy. Thus it is with many a soul I verily fear; they come and hear with some seeming delight, and go away fancying they have received advantage; but if they come to examine afterwards, they either find they got no good, or else they have lost it: they fancy they tasted when they did not; they liked the sermon well in hearing, but what was in it they do not well remember, and some there are to whom you must allow a considerable time, before they can tell you where the text was. Thy heart must be changed, and thou brought over to God, or else thou wilt find duties and ordinances to be but barren and empty cisterns; thou missest that soul-satisfying communion, and those solacing delights, which saints experience, when the Lord takes them into "his banqueting-house, and his banner over them is love."

Such are not fit for communion with God in glory. Alas! what delight would a wicked man take in heaven were he there? His nature is not suited to the place, so that he would not be pleased with the work of it. What would be those melodious notes, sounded by the triumphant choir above; what would be those lofty, charming strains, where there are no jarrings or untunable voices, to a vain sensualist, who is more taken with the harsh and unpleasant notes of sensual pleasure? What

would they be, more than music to a brute? The wicked would find no company in heaven fit for them. What would you do without new hearts in the New Jerusalem? Without clean hands and pure hearts, what would you do on God's holy hill? Set aside the decree of God, and yet the very nature of the thing doth require them to be holy, who have to do with such a holy God, in such a holy place.

Is it likely, that those who have no delight in serving God now, to whom duties are a burden, and sabbaths tedious, should have delight in spending an eternal sabbath with him in glory? Now, sermon-time is long, and prayer-time is long, and they are wishing the minister had come to an end before he hath half finished; they are glad when they are come to their worldly employment again. Could these be delighted to sing the praises of God through a long eternity? How can we reasonably suppose it? How could they be continually admiring and adoring the perfections of God, who are now bespattering them in his saints? How should they admire what they hate? It is impossible for thee, O sinner, to reach heaven in thy old frame, in thy natural and unregenerate state; and if thou couldst, heaven would be no heaven for thee; thou couldst never be delighted with what thou dost disaffect, for thou art not in a capacity to have communion with a holy God.

3. Consider, a reckoning day draws near, when unholiness shall receive that sentence, which will determine and unalterably fix their everlasting abode.

"The coming of the Lord draws nigh; the Judge standeth at the door;" the great day of general judgment is not far off, and a particular judgment to every person at death is nearer; if thou live fifty or sixty years, which is more than can be supposed as to many, yet they will soon be over. O that we could a little in our calm and sedate thoughts, imagine the judiciary process at the solemn day of accounts! O that we could in our minds paint out what will be the proceedings, when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open to the view of the world, when Christ comes to judgment! What if we saw the world dissolving; the glorious appearance of the supreme Judge, coming in flames of fire, surrounded with his royal guards, the angels, those heavenly courtiers! What if we saw all the sons and daughters of Adam about to receive their eternal doom! Where then would you desire to stand? at the right or left hand? And who can tell, how soon we may see these things? yea, for any thing I know, the next time sundry of us here may meet, will be at the bar of God. The Lord will summon you and me, with the rest of the world, to appear

before him ; and woe then to the Christless, graceless sinner. Ministers shall be brought, as divines usually represent it, to witness for the Lord against those ungodly ones they had to do with and could not gain. Amongst others, he will say, come, all you my messengers and ambassadors that have been employed in my work at Pontefract, amongst those sinners of the Gentiles there. Did not you warn them, and treat with them, and tell them of their danger ? Did not you offer grace and salvation to them by a Redeemer ?

Yes, Lord. According to our capacity and ability, as thou gavest in to us, we gave out to them. We have wooed, and entreated, and beseeched in thy name, many a time, that they would be reconciled unto God ; but for all that we could say or do, we could not get them to move. We have often had many a perplexing thought in our closets, not knowing what to say to those we had to address ; we would gladly have taken any way that might have won them, Lord, thou knowest ; we have sat poring and pondering, and considering what words to choose, that were most likely to be successful and to reach their hearts, and set them a seeking thee : we tried every way we could think of, sometimes speaking from mount Ebal, sometimes from mount Gerizim ; sometimes we endeavoured to draw and allure them, to win them with mercies and inviting promises ; we endeavoured to paint before them the beauties of holiness as well as we could, and set before them the feast of fat things, and the never fading glory of the New Jerusalem ; we held forth the Lord Jesus Christ on gospel terms, spoke for him in the most taking words that we could think of ; we told them of his comparable amiableness and divine attractions, how that he was “the chief among ten thousand, yea altogether lovely ;” but the pleasing charms of gospel grace did not affect their stupid hearts.

Another while we endeavoured to affright and drive them from sin, by telling them what would be the miseries of the heirs of hell ; we told them how impossible it was to have Christ and their lusts too ; that unless they were sanctified they could not be saved. Many alarms were sounded to rouse the secure, many a dreadful peal of sin’s punishment rung in the ears of careless and unconcerned souls, and many an awakening anathema awfully denounced. We endeavoured to set forth the horrors of the place of misery, to represent the terrors of the lost crew, to decipher the dismal state of the infernal society ; we told them of the day of judgment, and of those things which are now come to pass ; but they did not prepare for it, they acted as though they scarce believed what we said ; though we

made known the terrors of the Lord, they would not be persuaded. We prayed with them and for them, and preached to them with all the earnestness we could; but when our eyes were wet, theirs were dry, and they, almost as unconcerned as the seats they sat on. It would have been our joy and our crown could we have brought Christ and their souls together, and to have seen the Lord Jesus formed in them. O how glad should we have been, if, by our instrumentality, they had been turned to righteousness; if after we had called and cried, after we had tendered thy grace, spoken of thy love, acquainted them with their danger, we could have heard them sensibly cry out, "what must we do to be saved?" This would even have made our hearts to leap within us. We have waited long for this taking place, but after all we left them as we found them; those that were filthy, were so still; the wicked, were so still; those that we found unholy, when we had done our best, were unholy still: and if they be so till now, Lord, we cannot help it. What sentence will follow hereupon, your own reason and consciences will easily suggest; surely then will the Lord say, "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me." How sad will it be, to go from hearing and reading, and praying and singing together, to howl with devils and damned spirits! O that these things may never witness against any soul in this assembly! May all be persuaded to look after the things of their peace, before they be hid from their eyes.

4. Your distinguishing names, numerous train of duties, and multitude of religious performances, will not be sufficient and prevalent pleas, if you should be unholy at the day of reckoning.

It will signify little what passed in this life, if you die in a state of estrangement to God. We are not for tying religion to a party, however some may please to brand us; we are far from saying or thinking that none are really Christians, but such as are for our modes and way of profession: we would own those that profess faith in Christ and live up to it, and believe that the Lord hath children having various sentiments and apprehensions. Let none please themselves with this, that they belong to such a church, and they are true sons of it; thou mayest be a member of the best constituted church in the world, and yet be a hypocrite. If at the great day it appear, that thou art unrenewed, it will signify nothing what men called thee here; whether conformist, dissenter, episcopalian, presbyterian, independent, &c. (names that we would have buried) if thy name be not written in the Lamb's book of life. The name thou

didst pass under here, will not give thee admission into the church triumphant above.

Your many duties and religious performances will not excuse you. Your light may be great here, and your darkness so too hereafter; you may be advanced now in privileges and at last thrust down to hell for the non-improvement of them. We read of some who will say, "Lord, Lord, open to us, have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence, prophesied in thy name," &c. They seem very confident, they seem almost to demand it, "Open to us;" we have done so and so; yes, as if our Lord should say, you have waited on me as you plead, yet depart, for you "are workers of iniquity." They never dreamed of meeting with such a repulse; what! we shut out that have attended on thee so long in ordinances! we, that have taken so much pains, and gone so many miles to sermons on Sabbath days and lecture days, and sometimes with much hazard! what! we shut out after all this! We have opened our doors to thine, and wilt not thou open heaven's door to us? We that have been so near thee, must we depart from thee? Yes, I am not mistaken, notwithstanding all your pretences, I know you well enough who you are: I was never yet entertained in your hearts for all your fair show, and whatsoever you might make others believe. My ministers, it is true, took you into their communion, they admitted you into their societies, for they could but judge according to outward appearance, and the direction of charity; you seemed saints, and they were bound to think you such; but for all that, you cannot deceive me, "I search the heart and try the reins," and can tell how you have harboured your lusts, mine enemies, whilst I have been shut out; therefore begone, "depart, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not:" a cutting sentence from the great Judge. It will not do to plead that you sat under such a one's ministry, that you were a member of such a society; no, were you so, it is so much worse, it aggravates your case, that you were false-hearted and hypocritical under such great privileges.

Objection. But it may be, some are ready to say, you would persuade us that the way of holiness is safe, and that it is dangerous to miss it: but we do not see the way so clear. Doth not scripture say, that "judgment begins at the house of God," and they "that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," and "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God?" This is the language of scripture, and it hath the language of experience to back it. Have we not seen how such have suffered, and been deprived of their comfortable enjoyments? some have parted with their lives, being burnt at

stakes, some “stoned,” some “sawn asunder,” some “slain with the sword,” and what ! would you persuade us out of our senses ? For any thing we see, such as you call saints and believers, who make such a stir about religion, fare worse than any others.

Solution. This was in part answered before : but now we shall return a few things more directly, to blunt the edge of this frightful objection, and that briefly in some particulars.

1. By way of concession. We own it hath been so, and it is possible it may be so again, and these things are somewhat starting to sense ; yet this doth not hinder but that it is a way of safety : temporal, if the Lord see it good for us, if not, however, eternal safety. Some indeed have met with hard usage in the world from Satan’s instruments, and it need not be thought strange, for the seed of the serpent will be warring against the seed of the woman ; it hath been so, since enmity hath been put between them, and it will be so still.

2. Instances are not far to seek, which let us see how the righteous have been preserved in time of danger, by keeping close to God in a way of duty. Though they have been set at on every side, the attempts of the enemy have been altogether unsuccessful ; they have watched to apprehend them, and the Lord hath watched too, for their preservation ; we might easily prove it by sundry examples. Many times when the servants of God have been in danger, and they knew it not, they have had some secret intimations one way or other, some more than ordinary impression upon their spirits, or something hath fallen out providentially, which hath occasioned their removal from such a place, which before they did not design, and it hath afterwards appeared, that if they had staid but till the next day, their lives had been in danger. God hath sometimes delivered his people, before they knew that there was any evil intended against them ; he hath signally and seasonably stept in and preserved them from the mischievous designs of malicious men. Sometimes the wicked have been cut off for their sin, and in their sin, which is dismal indeed ; and the righteous have been made to dwell in safety. Some in the commission of their wickedness have been struck down dead upon the place, some in their return home, as might be shewn both from sacred and profane history. It is much more sad for sinners to be cut off, for they pass straight to hell. If saints were only in danger, and not the wicked, then there might seem to be ground for the objection, but seeing it is not so, it seems to have no great force.

3. As for the loss of the world, thou art ready to allege. This

will be the ready way to undo myself. It may be thou mayest not suffer much this way, nor part with much of thy estate, all do not; but suppose the worst; what if it should be so? Is it more necessary to be rich in gold than in grace? Are the things of the world so indispensably necessary, that it is impossible for thee to be happy without them? Surely, thou canst not say so; and we can say, that holiness is so necessary, that thou canst never arrive at happiness without it: so that the case lies here, the one is necessary, and the other is not; then surely it may be determined without much ado, what is most eligible: that which is of greatest necessity should be first looked after and secured. Heaven is worth having, though thou shouldst go poorly and meanly to it; and a dear bargain doubtless do they make, who turn their backs upon the way of God, to secure a little of the world, which they must shortly part with, at the furthest.

4. You hear of the sufferings of the saints, but you know not what inward and invisible supports they experience from above; indeed, if they had nothing but what others see, their case would be unpleasant and undesirable: but their heavenly Father gives them many a friendly, refreshing visit that few or none know of. Though the servants of God be sometimes low in the world, yet they have such converse and communion with him, such tastes of his love, as great ones that are wicked are strangers to, and such as they would not part with for their abundance; and so, though they have not such affluence and confluence of creature enjoyments as some have, yet the Lord makes it up in another and a better way. You see their crosses sometimes, but you do not see their comforts, which will abundantly compensate; you hear of their outward temporal losses, but you are not acquainted with their inward spiritual gain; you hear of their sufferings, but not of their supports; you hear of their harsher fare, and this affrights you, but you know not their sweetmeats, and delicate, exhilarating dainties; you hear of their sorrows, but not of their exalted joys in divine embraces, when the Lord Jesus doth clasp them in the arms of love: they have bread to eat that others know not of; joys such as strangers intermeddle not with; these make up abundantly the scarcity of outward things, especially if we look upon them as pledges and earnest of more and better.

5. To consider the issue of the saints' troubles and afflictions, and to compare it with that of the wicked's, would afford much support in this case. The prosperity of the wicked, hath a been puzzling point to God's own children for a long time. It was so with the Psalmist once; when he saw the ungodly pros-

per, he was ready to say, he had "cleansed his heart in vain;" but when he went into the sanctuary of God, he understood their end; he saw they were set in slippery places, and cast down into destruction, Psal. lxxiii. 12—20. Those that are in the way of impiety, may please themselves for a time with their vain, sensual delights; it may be, joy displays its colours in their faces, matters go as they would have them; they have little to disturb and disquiet them, but alas! it is as the crackling of thorns under a pot, it is soon over and gone, and then it leaves a sting behind. Now the saints have not only inward comforts, under outward troubles, but after them too; their afflictions end well, their trials have a comfortable conclusion, they oftentimes reap a great deal of benefit, even in this life, and by them they are fitted for the next. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" 2 Cor. iv. 17. It is but light affliction, and yet there is a weight of glory, it is but for a moment, and yet worketh an eternal weight of glory, which in the original is very emphatical, and we scarce know how to express it in English.

6. Suppose saints should be taken off by a violent death, which is the worst that can be thought of, and most frightful to nature; yet for them to die is gain: and if thou wilt be a disciple of Christ, thou must either lay down thy life for him actually, or in purpose and design, if called to it: Christ will own none that prefer their lives before him. If the enemies of God's people did but know what a good turn they do them by taking them off, it is highly probable they would spare them to be afflicted and punished a little longer. By suffering martyrdom, the saints have a pearl added to their crown, and are sooner possessed of it too. Thou art thinking, it may be, that thou couldst never lay down thy life to suffer for Christ, thou couldst not go through the fire to him; but thou canst not tell, for if the Lord call thee to it, he would vouchsafe suitable help. Some, that before were very timorous and dejected, have been enabled to bear up with christian courage and undaunted magnanimity, not being afraid to look the king of terrors in the face. O with what cheerfulness have some gone to the stake, saying, "Come, it is but a quarter of an hour, and then we shall be in heaven;" with many more expressions, evidencing the like exultation of spirit. Others have gone off the stage of the world with triumph, being about to enter into their master's joy; let us gird up the loins of our minds and say, let us go after as fast as we can; resolving, through grace, that nothing shall be

able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

7. The objection was partly raised from those words: "Judgment must begin at the house of God," and thence was inferred that saints suffer first, therefore they are in most danger; but read the verse through, and then the case is fully determined, that holiness is the safer path; it is 1 Pet. iv. 17, "If it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them, that obey not the gospel of God?" He argues thence, to shew the doleful condition of impenitent sinners; if it be so with us, what will be their lot? surely that must needs be amazingly dreadful! If the righteous suffer something, what then will become of the wicked? Here is an argument to make us quit the way of impiety, and not to plead for it. It is true, saints may suffer; but this is for their good; God may correct his children, and doth so, but it is to drive folly out of them, not to hurt them. Judgment may begin at the house of God, but it is to make way for mercy; those judgments prepare for deliverances here, and glory hereafter; and though they are not secured from affliction, yet they are from hell.

Secondly, To saints.—Which is the second branch of the exhortation.

Be you perfecting holiness in the fear of God; be ye holy in all manner of conversation, yea, be holy as God is holy. The Lord hath been pleased to deal with your hearts, bless him for it, and shew it forth in your lives; let holiness appear in all you do; maintain the power of it; start not back for fear of men; be resolved upon a holy course, come what will.

1. Maintain a high and reverend esteem for the public appointments of Christ, and manifest it by a constant and devout attendance on them.

Beware of having slight thoughts of your spiritual food, (if they be really the truths of God that are delivered to you,) lest the Lord take it away. The gospel is a moveable commodity; Christ stands at the door and knocks; standing is the next posture to going, and it may well be expected that he will take his leave, if he be not welcome; he is not beholden to us for our religion.

Let us manifest that we have such an esteem, by our constant attendance on these ordinances. We should be waiting daily at the posts of wisdom's gates. Where can you expect to meet with God, but where he hath said he will be found? You may find him where he is wont to take his walks, and that is in his ordinances; for "the king is held in the galleries;" thither do

ye come to have communion with him. We should not suffer every little thing to divert us ; it may be, that day thou wast absent, something was spoken which would have been of special and peculiar use to thy soul ; at such a time the devil is busy to obstruct thee and throw impediments in thy way. We should break through difficulties, and it will be so in some measure, if there be a real spiritual hungering after the bread of life.

Let us be attentive in our attendance on them. We must not only be present, but diligent when we are there ; careful so to hear that our souls may live, we should take in food which may be for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. No wonder if persons be crying out, " O my leanness, my leanness," if they will not come to taste of those provisions which the Lord hath made ready. Do you expect a person to be lively and look well that will not eat ? Many would be sorry to have such meals for their bodies, as they put off their souls with. We must not only be careful to come, but mind what we come for, and mind what we are about ; it is work enough at once to do it as we ought. Our thoughts are apt to wander, we should endeavour to call them in, and awe them with a sense of an omniscient eye. We should not be plotting and contriving our secular concerns, when about the great and momentous business of eternity ; but be wakeful and watchful, else we shall attend but sorrowfully. God hath not appointed ordinances to sleep at, we have beds for that purpose, and should not choose the assembly for a place to sleep in, as some seem to do by consulting easy postures : it is well if some do not place themselves conveniently for this end, and when they awake, are glad that the glass is run so far.

If there be a due esteem for ordinances, there will be a care to prepare for them. We should take pains with our hearts in secret, and endeavour to get them into a right frame. The Lord knows who of us here, prayed this morning in secret, before we came to seek him with others, and if we did, how we managed it.

2. Conscientiously keep up family devotion.

O that every householder here would say with Joshua : " As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," whatever others do ; and like David : " I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." O that a few things upon this head may be of use, and be followed with success ! I fear we have many prayerless families amongst us, many that live year after year, and yet never call upon God together. That family, surely, is in a miserable condition, where prayer is not kept up : " Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the

families that call not on thy name," Jer. x. 25 : a dreadful text. Is it a desirable thing to be under the wrath of God ? What, have you so many family wants, family sins, family mercies, and not family prayer ? This is not "praying with all prayer and supplication." Know, that you have the care of souls under your roof committed to you ; and to be negligent herein will be of dismal consequence. Have you no pity or compassion for those that are flesh of your flesh ? Your praying would teach your children to pray. What is the reason of so many prayerless families ? Surely one is, says Mr. Gurnall, "persons were not brought up in praying families, and therefore do not perform this duty ; if you pray, it is likely your children would, when they have families, and so religion would be propagated."

But, say some, I pray alone, will not that do ? No, it will not, one duty will not excuse another ; besides, I doubt dost, thou speakest more in that word *alone* than thou thinkest ; thou prayest alone, that is, without God, thou dost not meet with him in secret.—But I have no time. What, no time to serve God ? All thy time is to serve him, and must none be spared for this duty ?—But my business will not allow me. Will it not ? Thy heart is unwilling, that is the chief reason. How unreasonable is this objection, that thy business will not give leave ! Man, this is thy great business. Wilt thou tell God at the great day, that thou hadst other work ? Why not drive on a trade both for heaven and earth ?—But I am ashamed to pray before others. What, ashamed of thy duty ? Thou needest shame with nothing but sin. See these, with many more, answered by Mr. Doolittle in his sermon about Family Prayer, Morn. Exer. Thou wantest expressions, thou sayest ; nay, it may be, impressions rather. Study thy wants, sins, mercies, this will help thee. Do as well as thou canst, and the Lord will be with thee. He looks not so much at the expression, as at the sincerity of the heart.

I will repeat a passage I lately read, in the life of an eminent minister : he said, "he did not know how a person could be saved, that did not pray in his family." Whether that be absolutely so or not, I cannot tell ; but I hesitate not to say, that if a person hath been told again and again that it was his duty, and had it closely urged ; to live then in the neglect of it, is a black mark : if Christ be in the heart, he will be in the house. Another passage I met with concerning a town in Switzerland, consisting of ninety houses, which was destroyed by an earthquake, except the half of one house, where the master of the family was earnestly praying with his wife and children upon their

bended knees to God. It is, you see, sometimes of use for temporal salvation.

We might easily enlarge here, but must not run too far. Let me exhort, entreat, beseech you to set about this necessary duty ; that your families may be no longer prayerless families. O that you may not be found to have lived all your lives in the neglect of this duty, when death comes to drag you out of your houses ! The day is coming apace, and is not far off, when you will, when you must be serious. And you that have been careful and conscientious in performing this duty, go on, it is not long before your praying shall be turned into praising, your hosannahs into hallelujahs.

SERMON V. *

NATURE OF CONVERSION.

MATT. XVIII. 3.

Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

IN the first verse of this chapter the disciples were inquiring, who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven ? But our Lord was resolved to put a stop to their vain curiosity. This he did, first, by a visible sermon : “ Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst,” that he might teach them the doctrine of humility. Secondly, by an audible sermon in these words : “ Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” We are here taught not to be childish, but child-like in several dispositions. Children are not without their faults ; though they may be so young as to be without actual transgression, yet they have the seeds of all the sins in the world in their nature. Little children are generally praised as being without covetousness and ambition. In the text, our Saviour shows us the nature of true conversion, it makes men become as little

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