

ORIGINAL SERMONS,

SELECTED FROM MANUSCRIPTS,

BY THE

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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 sanetitas 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

* Preached at Little Lever, April 29th, 1686.

children; and the necessity of it, without it we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. From the text we may observe, 1. The truth of the assertion, "I say unto you:"—I, that am truth itself—that know the terms of salvation—that shall be the judge of quick and dead—that have all power in heaven and in earth, so that none can enter heaven but those whom I let in—I tell you, that except ye be converted, and become as little children, &c. 2. He not only asserts this truth, but confirms it; he that never spake an idle word sanctions it with an asseveration: "Verily I say unto you," &c. 3. See here the positiveness of Christ in what he said: "You shall not enter;" without this change you shall not enter into the kingdom: as if he had said, I have the keys of heaven and keep the door, none can come into that state without my leave, and I tell you plainly, that except ye be converted, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Holiness must go before happiness.

The doctrine we shall raise, and at this time insist upon from these words is, that converting grace makes persons become like little children.

The text and context may have relation to two descriptions of children, those just born, or those who are a little grown. We shall endeavour to shew wherein converts resemble both these. Converts resemble little children newly born:

1. Children enter the world with much difficulty and hazard. So God's children have a difficult entrance into a state of grace; "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. He must be renewed by the influences of the Holy Spirit, accompanying the word of God to his heart. And Oh! what pangs and sorrows the poor Christian undergoes, when God first lays hold on him. Many bitter sighs, and tears, and groans are produced ere he is born again. In his fears he is ready to cry, shall I not die before the change take place? "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it," Matt. vii. 14. The entrance into the way of holiness is so narrow, that if ever you be converted, you will experience trouble of soul, that you have been so long in sin, and so long an enemy to God and yourself. There are two descriptions of persons, whose entrance into a state of grace is more difficult than ordinary, namely, rich men, and old men. As for rich men our Saviour says: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," Matt. xix. 24. By a camel, some understand a cable rope; now it is impossible for a cable rope to go through the eye of a needle, yet it may be so untwined

as that in time it may be made to pass: so rich men, though it be hard for them to be converted, may be brought to see themselves so vile and little in their own eyes, that by the grace of God, they may yet be brought through. I have also said it is peculiarly difficult for old sinners to be born again; "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil," Jer. xiii. 23. The longer men live in sin, the more difficult is it for them to be brought to God. All sinners have not the same measure of sorrow and trouble at their conversion, yet all have some experience of it, in some degree.

2. An infant has always a principle of life and motion; so converts have a principle of spiritual life infused into their souls. In God's family there are no abortions; all his children are brought forth into a state of grace; "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. ii. 1. The poor sinner, when first quickened, is ashamed to tell any body his state; he dares not tell good Christians how it is with him, lest he should prove a hypocrite; he dares not tell the wicked, lest they should laugh him to scorn: notwithstanding this degree of shame, there is life in the soul. Let me ask you now, if you have ever seen your miserable state by nature? Have you ever seen yourself ready to be dragged down to hell torments for your sins? If you are true converts, you have experienced something of this, and have been made alive to God: "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace," Rom. viii. 6. The carnal mind is dead to God and all holy duties, but is alive to the world and worldly affairs. On the other hand, a gracious soul is dead to sin and the world, but alive to God, delights in holy duties, and can discern a difference between what he was, and the state in which he now is.

3. The child bears the image of the father: so converts bear a likeness to God, they have his image. The image of our heavenly Father consists in "knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness." "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Eph. iv. 23, 24. Now, has God given you to understand his will more experimentally than formerly? Has he given you the knowledge of himself "in the face of Jesus Christ?" Are your wills rectified, and made conformable to the will and law of God in true holiness? God's children are made partakers of a divine nature. Religion is not only an outward conformity of the outward man to the law of God, but an inward conformity of the soul and all its faculties thereunto, and a Christian's actings in religion proceed from

grace in the heart. What say you? Hath the seed of God's word been sown in your hearts, and formed your natures into the nature of Christ? Saints are "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead; by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." You cannot own God to be your Father, unless you are followers of him as dear children: "As he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation," 1 Pet. i. 15.

4. A child comes weeping into the world; so God's children are crying children. As soon as they are born, they cry, "Abba, Father." "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father," Gal. iv. 6. O the tears, groans, and cries of a young convert! He could willingly give himself unto prayer. It was said of Paul when he was converted, "Behold he prayeth." Did you but see the Christian in his closet, you would find him grieving for his sins, praying unto the Lord for grace and acceptance. As a new-born child has no way of expressing his wants, but by crying; so the Christian has no way to express his desires, but by prayer: "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found," Psal. xxxii. 6. Every one that is truly godly will pray. "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth;" they wrestle like Jacob, who "had power over the angel and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto him." Hos. xii. 4.

5. There is a natural instinct in children, as soon as born, to seek the mother's breast; so a gracious soul, when newly converted, desires "the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby." There is nothing more nourishing to an infant, or more desired by it, than its mother's breast; so panteth the true convert after God. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" Psal. xlii. 2. If you attempt to put a little child off with toys and fine things, it will not be pleased long, it will cry for its mother's breast; so let a man come into the pulpit with pretty Latin and Greek sentences, and fine stories, these will not content a hungry soul, he must have the sincere milk of the word to feed upon: "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food," Job xxiii. 12; as if he should say, I love it more than my meal when I am hungry; I know not how to live without it. A poor good woman said, in time of persecution, when they took away the Christians' bibles, "I cannot part with my bible, I know not how to live without it." When a gracious soul has heard a profitable sermon, he says, methinks it does me good at my heart; it is the greatest nou-

ishment I have: "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver," Psal. cxix. 14, and 72.

6. Converts resemble little children in their weakness and dependance. Nothing is so weak as an infant when it comes into the world; it is so helpless, that unless some careful nurse take care of it, it is in great danger of being lost. A young convert is so feeble in his own apprehension, that he is now sensible he can do nothing as he ought to do—can neither stand, walk, nor move one step in the way of God's commandments. It is well, saith he, I have a father in heaven to take care of me and help me. I once thought I could have shifted pretty well for myself, have prayed well, and performed duties well, but I see I cannot pray of myself; never surely was a poor creature so weak as I! "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God," 2 Cor. iii. 5. "When I am weak then am I strong," saith Paul; we may, therefore, be glad when we are weak in our own sight, then we look for strength from God. We cannot go a step but when we lean on our God, and if we have any strength to do any thing that is good, we must receive it from God; "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," Phil. iv. 13.

7. There is a resemblance between little children and converts in their harmlessness. Infants are just emblems of innocence and harmlessness; none could dash them against the stones but those who are hardened in barbarity and cruelty; so a child of God, by converting grace becomes harmless. "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lust and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another; but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared"—this quite altered us; instead of being hateful and hating one another, we could not lift up a hand or a foot to hurt any body. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.—They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," Isa. xi. 6 & 9. Those very persons that formerly were like wolves, leopards, and lions for fierceness and cruelty, become like lambs for meekness; though they are the same persons, yet their nature is so changed that they seem as if they were not the same men, they now are "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke."

Thus we have shewn wherein converts do resemble little infants, we shall now show wherein they represent children a little grown. To such-like our Saviour seems particularly to refer, in the connexion of our text ; for it is said, he “ called a little child unto him.” Converts resemble such,

1. In their guileless disposition. Little children are generally plain and downright what they seem to be, and do not dissemble. A child is known by his doings, and will express his disposition. “ Esau was a cunning man,” and could hide his intent of killing his brother, but “ Jacob was a plain man.” David says : “ Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile,” Psalm xxxii. 2; that is, no predominant or approved guile: if a convert finds guile in his heart, he hates, abhors, and strives against it. “ I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love,” Psalm cxix. 163. “ Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile,” John i. 47; he is an honest, harmless, gracious man; what he seems to be. “ These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God,” Rev. xiv. 4, 5. Not so liars and dissemblers, that profess something of religion, but make no conscience of secret duties and of truth; they are none of God’s children.

2. Little children are of a gall-less disposition; they may be angry, but bear no malice. “ Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men,” 1 Cor. xiv. 20. Children are sometimes angry and fall out, but soon become friends again; so God’s children are “ gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.” If a man be implacable, it is not the property or disposition of God’s children. “ Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye,” Col. iii. 12, 13. Some have no gentleness towards those that have angered them, but God’s children should not let the “ the sun go down upon their wrath.” “ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you,” Eph. iv. 31, 32. So also the apostle Peter: “ Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing;” not threatening, they shall have as hot as

they bring: if any of God's children have a rugged temper, they will pray and strive against it, and if at any time they have been overcome by it, they will be more watchful.

3. Little children are submissive to correction. When a child has committed a fault and is made sensible of it, he submits to his father's correction. "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?" Heb. xii. 9. The converted soul is so meekened by grace, that he does not attempt to contend with God, and therefore submits. "It is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more," Job xxxiv. 31, 32. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: 'Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke;'" that is, I think I was the most stubborn and unruly wretch that ever was yoked: but now, he saith, "turn thou me and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God;" I would lay me down at God's feet, there I would lie, there I would cry, and there I would die; if I must perish for my sins, I will submit and say, "The Lord is righteous." When such conduct as this is shown, then God is heard saying, "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him," Jer. xxxi. 18, 20. The converted soul is then ready to say, I bless God who has taken down my stubborn and unruly spirit; the strokes of God did me no good, till the grace of God brought me to this submissive frame and temper of heart.—Has it been thus with you?

4. Little children are full of jealousies and fears. A child fears his father's displeasure, and when he sees him angry is grieved; so a child of God is more grieved to see his heavenly Father offended, than himself afflicted. It is said, Ps. cxxx. 4, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." A carnal heart would take encouragement from this to sin against God; but a gracious soul will say, if God be so tender-hearted as to forgive my sin, I will be so tender-spirited as to fear sinning against him: I dare never offend so gracious a God; for "they shall fear the Lord and his goodness," Hosea iii. 5.

5. Little children are very affectionate. They will maintain an affection for their parents, companions, and sometimes for strangers who treat them kindly; so God's children love their heavenly Father, the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts: they love their fellow-Christians, by this we "know

that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren:" these are the companions in whom is all their delight, those "that fear thee, and keep thy precepts." It is a common saying, birds of a feather flock together: God's children cannot well be alone: when Paul was converted, "he assayed to join himself to the disciples," and when the apostles were "let go, they went to their own company." Heaven-born souls will talk with those that are like them, and love them, but cannot love wicked men: "As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another," 1 Thess. iv. 9. Heathens were accustomed to say of the primitive Christians, "See how they love one another."

6. Little children are very inquisitive. If a child walk out with his father into the fields, he will ask perhaps twenty questions before they come home again; he will be inquiring, Father, what is this for? Who is that yonder? &c. Thus it is with God's children also; those whose faces are turned towards Zion will inquire: "What must we do to be saved?" They will have something to say to a godly minister; some case of conscience to propose; it is said of God's people—"they shall ask the way to Zion;"—they will be inquiring which way they may get to heaven. The grace of God will make men inquisitive persons.

7. Little children are generally tractable. Children are apt to learn from, and imitate their parents; it is much easier to teach some children Latin and Greek, than it is to instruct grown up persons to read English: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," Prov. xxii. 6. A new vessel is soon seasoned; so converts are apt to learn. There is one great lesson they must all learn: "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me," John vi. 44, 45. They are taught by God to pray and believe, to lay hold on Christ; they are taught "the truth as it is in Jesus;" that is, experimentally and savingly.

8. Little children do all for their parents, and acknowledge them in all they have; so the child of God does nothing for himself but for God's glory. Let me be for the Lord, says a gracious soul, I am content to be his, and acknowledge all I have is from God: "By the grace of God I am what I am;—I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the

grace of God which was with me," 1 Cor. xv. 10. If you ask a little child, "Who was it brought you over that dirty place?" He will say, "My father." "Who bought you those new clothes?" "Why my father;—my father does all for me." A child of God will give his heavenly Father all the glory: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory," Psalm cxv. 1. "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" is it thyself? O no! I can do nothing of myself, it is God that does all: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," Eph. i. 3. All our care and concern in religion will come to nothing without God's help and grace: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Rom. xi. 36.

9. Converts resemble little children in their growth. The longer children live, the stronger they grow; so believers grow in grace: "Ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall." Christians, are you not ashamed of yourselves that you are no taller, after so long standing, than you were the first year of your spiritual life? Shall we have ordinances and the various means of grace, and grow no better? "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," Prov. iv. 18. If you grow not, perhaps it is because you are not a living member of Christ's body.

10. Little children are mostly of an humble and condescending disposition. "Whosoever shall humble himself," saith Christ, "as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 4. The child of a prince will play with the child of a peasant, and will not mind high things such as crowns and sceptres. Thus it is with the children of God, they are content with their stations, and can say, "My heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me," Psalm cxxxi. 1. A child of God will not make so much stir for the riches and honours of the world as other people; he is content with ordinary food and raiment: "Godliness with contentment is great gain:" and St. Paul says, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."—I have learned this lesson, that if God take all, I am content. A Christian will be of a condescending temper: he will "condescend to men of low estate," and "esteem other better than himself." He is not seeking after the dignities of this world, he is looking for a greater object, even the kingdom of heaven.

We now come to the use and application of our subject. If

converting grace makes persons become like little children, we may learn these four things:—

1. That the power of God is unlimited. He that can change man's nature, so that old sinners, who have lived so long in sin, should be born again; that they who have scorned the saints and counted them a company of fools, should be made like them, praying and regarding other spiritual duties more than others; that they who have formerly pursued the world with such eagerness, should now cast it at their heels, become meek and patient in spirit, and, it may be, outstrip others in holiness that set out long before them:—he that can produce such wonderful changes, must indeed be unlimited in power. The Almighty, by his grace, can of a grey-headed man raise up a son to call him blessed, nothing is impossible with him; he can renew the heart, unite the soul to himself, and cleanse it from the filthiness of sin: “Such were some of you,” that is, as filthy and polluted sinners as those before-mentioned, “but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,” 1 Cor. vi. 11.

2. We may learn, that the work of the ministry is very great. Nobody knows what we have to do, or the difficulty of that work in which we are engaged. A pious husband, that strives with an unconverted wife to do her soul good, may perceive something of the difficulty when he cannot by any means prevail. Gehazi, when sent to lay the prophet's staff upon the dead child's face, returned to his master, saying, “the child is not awakened:” so we go out and preach the word to poor, dead sinners, and are many times obliged to return to God and complain, “the child is not awaked,” we can do no good, souls are not converted: but, however, God will pay the nurse though the child die, and if we are faithful to our work we shall not lose our reward, but receive it to the full another day: yet it is a great burden to labour for souls when they are not converted. You think it hard, when for preaching God's word we are imprisoned with thieves and rogues, as if we were not fit to go loose; but we have greater trials than these, when we labour to do good to souls, and see no good effects. You have great occasion to “pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified,” 2 Thess. iii. 1.

3. If converting grace makes persons become like little children, then conversion is no half work. As a child has the same number of members as his father, so a child of God is renewed throughout, in body, soul, and spirit. A half persuasion to be good, God cannot abide; therefore, saith the apostle, “I pray

God sanctify you wholly." As the soul is in every part of the man, sees in the eye, hears in the ear, so converting grace changes the whole man. It makes a change not only in the mind, but also in the will and affections; it is not merely a moral change from profaneness to civility, or an external change to a form of godliness, but it changes men's dispositions and inclinations; "All things become new." Do you think heaven will be peopled with profane sinners, idle neglecters of duties, and vain talkers? O no! men must be fitted for heaven, or they will never arrive thither.

4. If true conversion makes men become like little children, "then there is reason to fear few people go to heaven." We may see young persons when they grow up a little, become proud and stubborn, and oftentimes the older they grow the worse; but Christ says, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Look to yourselves, for few find the way to heaven; because "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it," Matt. vii. 14. "The righteous scarcely are saved;" that is, with much difficulty, they endure many a bitter pang ere they come to heaven. Most men go in the broad road; they may easily go to hell; may sleep themselves there, and by forgetfulness of God and their souls may bring themselves to it; but the way to heaven is hard. You had need be jealous lest you should not be the Lord's. If times of calamity come, God will take care of his children, but he regards not others. If you profess to be Christians, and are not like God, he will not accept you, nor any thing you do, but will at last cast you into hell; if you resemble him, he will look after you and preserve you at all times, and in all conditions, so that persecutions shall not daunt nor hurt you. Examine, therefore, whether you be the children of God by conversion: for "except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

SERMON VI.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE WORLD.

GALATIANS I. 4.

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

ALL have but a time to live in this world, and when we have acted our part, must enter a state of happiness or woe to all eternity. Man being by nature in a sinful and miserable condition, by reason of the fall, is an enemy to God and holiness ; but God hath given Christ, and Christ hath given himself to be our Saviour and Redeemer. There are several things from which Christ came to redeem us ; from the wrath to come, the captivity of Satan, the curse of the law, the dominion of sin, the condemnation of sin, the sting of death, the fear of death, the legal and ceremonial law, and from this present evil world.

To explain the words of our text a little, we may notice, First, The meritorious cause of our deliverance,—the undertaking of Christ, “ he gave himself for our sins—the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,” and “ he is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.” Secondly, He redeems us from this present evil world. It is not evil of itself originally, but accidentally. It is an evil world, as it respects both sin and suffering. It is in this world all the sins of men are committed ; and O how great and cursed are the sins here committed ! On earth it is men’s pleasure to sin, but in hell is their torment. There will be no meat nor drink, no houses nor lands, no silver nor gold to delight men ; it will be the time of their sorrow and misery. In this evil world, believers themselves are often overcome and borne down by sin. The present world is also a state of suffering. It is the saint’s purgatory ; all their hell is in this world, and they may despair of finding true happiness here, for one trouble comes after another. Thirdly, It is called this present world ; and it is well for good men it is only a present world. “ I would not live always.” While God is building his church, he keeps up the stage of this world, but when the number of his elect shall be finished, he will then

take it down ; it is but for a little while and the righteous shall be delivered, and have a joyful entrance into glory and happiness : it will be but a little longer, and the pleasures, profits, and honours of this world will be at an end.

The doctrine contained in the text is, that Christ himself, and Christ alone, doth deliver all his people, and only his, from this present evil world.

In the discussion of this doctrine, we shall endeavour to shew,

I. What this world is from which our Lord delivers his people? The world is sometimes taken for the whole frame of heaven and earth ; sometimes figuratively for the men of the world, either all mankind, or the unregenerate part of the world. By the world, sometimes, the things of the world are meant ; these may be either good or evil in their nature. Some of the things of the world are evil occasionally, as abused by men. Now Christians are delivered from all these, "they are crucified to the world," and the world to them. We shall inquire,

II. Who they are that are thus delivered? The apostle says, *us* ; this may signify the church and people of God collectively, that are called out of the world and set apart for God and his service. These are redeemed by Christ, he hath loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood ; they shall abide through all ages in spite of all opposition and persecution. It may also refer to every particular person in the church of Christ, every true Christian, who shall be kept from this present evil world.

III. Let us shew, what it is in the world from which Christ delivers his people. 1. He delivers them from the state of the world. Every man and woman is born in a state of sin and misery, of wrath and condemnation ; "for the whole world lieth in wickedness," 1 John v. 19. The people of God have a new nature given them, and are not in the same condition as the world ; they who were afar off from God and holiness, are "made nigh by the blood of Christ ;" they are taken out of the devil's family and are "made fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God." "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk, not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them ; because of the blindness of their heart," Eph. iv. 17, 18. And again, "The scripture hath concluded all under sin," but when the promise by faith is given to them that believe, they all become "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 22, 26. Though the righteous may be chastened in this world for their offences, they shall not be condemned with the world ; for they are not of the world.

2. They are delivered from the snares of the world. The true Christian is, by converting grace brought out of the snare of the devil, who hath the wicked in chains and keeps them in his circuit. Believers are set at liberty and shall never be entangled as the wicked are ; their eyes are opened to discover the snare in every thing ; “ Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird ;” and “ we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not ; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not,” 1 John v. 18 ; that is, not so as to get him within his dominion.

3. True Christians are delivered from the spirit of the world. The men of the world are of a base and low spirit, they are all for themselves ; but the people of God are of a brave, noble disposition. “ The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.” “ The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy,” James iii. 17. Being partakers of this wisdom they mind the things of God, and of Christ, and of the world to come ; but the men of the world being influenced by the spirit of the world, seek those things which are “ earthly, sensual, and devilish.”

4. They are delivered from the course of this evil world. They formerly “ walked according to the course of this world,” and were like other folks ; they could talk vainly and profanely, they could swear, lie, and act as others did ; but now the case is altered, and men “ think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you,” 1 Peter iv. 4. Let me beseech you, “ brethren, by the mercies of God—that ye be not conformed to this world ; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,” Rom. xii. 1, 2. “ Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things,” Phil. iii. 18, 19 ; that is, there are many among you, pretended Christians, that thus walk : “ but our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Christians have a peculiar course contrary to that of the world.

IV. Let us consider, when Christians are delivered from this present evil world? 1. They may be said to be delivered from this present evil world at their conversion. The Spirit of God does then convince them of their sin and misery ; that they are amongst the crowd of those that perish, and bids them save themselves from this untoward generation. It may be, poor graceless souls sit out many a strong conviction, but at last the word of the Lord comes with power, and they are

plucked as brands out of the fire; then the soul is ready to say, this world hath bewitched me. His former companions come and say, go with us; what, must all be lost but a few precise people? But they cannot prevail; for he thinks, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matt. xvi. 26. He has now learned to say, with Asaph, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25. I will not be put off with the world, it is only a morsel, and will not be a satisfying portion for the soul. Having tasted the grace of God, and of Christ, and true religion, having once enjoyed this heavenly water, he will not thirst after worldly things, but pant for the living God.

2. We are delivered from this evil world, when we make progress in sanctification. The more a soul mounts heavenward, the less all other things appear. He thinks within himself, the world is not the New Jerusalem, nor worth taking any notice of. "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 18. The believing soul can say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," Phil. iii. 7, 8. A Christian, as he grows in sanctification, becomes more indifferent to the world; he is willing to part with houses, and lands, and wife, and children, and even with his own life, for Christ's sake and the gospel's, if called to it; for he knows that his Lord and Saviour can be better to him than all these things. If even a prison be his lot, his soul can sing praises when God is with him, and he rises above the world.

3. A Christian is delivered from this present evil world, when he departs into the world of spirits. God will not suffer his people to be always tossed on the sea of life, but will in due time take them out of it, and their souls shall not see destruction; death sets the souls of God's people at liberty. God does not love to have his people long from him, therefore he sends death to fetch them home to himself; then they are delivered from all afflictions, temptations, and corruptions, and are conducted to that place, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest," where the devil can never throw a dart at them more.

4. The righteous will be completely delivered from this present evil world, on the morning of the resurrection. At death, the body is left for a while in the grave; but at the last day,

the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall arise; the earth and the sea shall give up the dead that are in them, and the bodies of the saints shall then be glorified like the body of Jesus Christ. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord," 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. The devil shall then be quite cast out and reign no more; for Christ "must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Job saith, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God," Job xix. 25, 26. We leave the bodies of our pious friends in the grave, but they shall rise again; they will be "accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead," where they "neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection," Luke xx. 35, 36.

V. Let us proceed to notice what Christ has done, whereby his people are delivered from this present evil world? He has delivered them,

1. By his meritorious life and death. "He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." He might have come in power, pomp, and glory; but he choose to come in a poor, mean, and despised condition. Why therefore should we make account of these things which he cast at his feet? Christ is now become our atonement; the bonds are cancelled between the world and us; he hath set us at liberty, and we are now dead to the world and married to Christ; so also let your affections and thoughts be.

2. Christ hath delivered us by his victorious resurrection and ascension. By rising again from the dead, raising the spirits of his people above the world, and his ascension on high, the souls of believers are advanced to sit with Christ "in heavenly places," and thereby become heavenly-minded. Christ is gone into heaven and has taken possession for his saints.

3. He delivers his people by his prevailing intercession for them. "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me," John xvii. 9. When on earth, he prayed for their deliverance from the evil in the world, and that they might be with him where he is, to behold his glory. Now he is in heaven, he takes care of them; he is

“a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted,” Heb. ii. 17, 18. Such is his concern for them, “that he will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear, but will with the temptation make a way to escape.”

4. His people are delivered from this present evil world, by the Holy Spirit’s efficacious working. The Spirit convinces the soul, that all the favours of the world are of no value; that its threatenings are not to be dreaded, nay, that we should “glory in tribulation.” Assisted by the Spirit, his people can trample on worldly things; they are of a different spirit from the men of the world, they are not busied about trifles, but are “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.”

VI. We shall mention the reasons, why our Lord delivers his people from this present evil world?

1. Because none else can. The redemption of the soul is precious, “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,” 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

2. Christ delivers his people from this present evil world, because there is no proportion between a soul and the whole world; it is not all worth one soul, neither can it satisfy the immortal part. 3. Christ was purposely fitted for this work. He was both God and man, and therefore is “able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them,” Heb. vii. 25. 4. It is one principal part of his undertaking, that he should deliver his people from this present evil world. Let us now inquire,

VII. Why Christ delivers *his*, and only *his*? 1. Because those, and those only, were given him by the Father: “Ye believe not,” saith Christ, “because ye are not of my sheep:—all that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out,” John. x. 26. & vi. 37. 2. These and only these, are partakers of the glorious privileges of the gospel: “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him,” John xiv. 23. These people are a chosen generation. 3. They are redeemed by Christ to bring forth different fruits from those produced by the world: he “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” Titus ii. 14. 4. Christ hath prepared a king-

dom of glory, for those who are not of this world, and prepares them for that state: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," Col. i. 12, 13. Let us shew,

VIII. How it can be said God's people are *already* delivered from this present evil world? We answer, because the price is already paid. They may be said to be delivered, because the ransom is laid down for their freedom. They have also the promise of deliverance while in the world, and at last deliverance from it. They may be said to have the first-fruits of it, being sealed by the Holy Spirit, which is the earnest of their inheritance. They already experience less deliverances, which are the pledges of further and greater. We shall now proceed to the application.

This doctrine may be useful by way of information.

1. If Christ delivers his, and only his, then learn that Christians are very highly favoured: they are not like other men, who are of this world, but are from above. The Christian's relations are above; his father, who is the Lord Jehovah; his elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ; his mother, which is the church; his kindred, which are the angels and glorified spirits—are all above. Christians are kings in disguise, they are not known in this world, they have a prepared kingdom, and now and then they have secret intercourse with the God of that state. This doctrine may inform us,

2. Why the people of God are hated, despised, and persecuted in this world. It is because they are not of it, but chosen out of it; therefore carnal men are ready to say of a Christian, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live," Acts xxii. 22. It is said in Heb. xi. 38, concerning the people of God, that they are they "of whom the world was not worthy;" and yet "they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." If then you desire to be different in sentiment and practice from the men of this world, you must expect tribulation here.

3. We may learn, that the Christian's religion is not suited to the world's interests. "My kingdom," saith Christ, "is not of this world:"—it is a spiritual kingdom, which he sets up in the hearts of his people; "the kingdom of God is within you."

4. We are taught by this doctrine, that the world is not so excellent a thing as men are apt to esteem it. Christ redeems his people out of it; and all its enjoyments, which men so eagerly pursue, are only vanity and vexation of spirit. What

all men that they are so concerned about what cannot satisfy, but so indifferent to spiritual things which are far better? God gives the earth to the children of men, but reserves better things for his people: "Man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them," Psalm xxxix. 6. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition," 1 Tim. vi. 9.

We may make use of this doctrine, by way of conviction to the carnal world. If Christ delivers his, and only his, then what will become of you that have your portion in this world, that are wise only for time, that have the world in your mind the last at night and first in the morning, and thus shew it is the chief thing you seek? Now consider,

1. Does not the world stifle the convictions of God's word many times? Do not the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the good seed of the word so that it becomes unfruitful? Men lose their convictions, and deface the impressions of the Spirit of God, which they had under the ministry of the word, by their business and worldly concerns. One says, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it." Another says, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." Another replies, "I have married a wife, and therefore cannot come." Thus this present evil world is doted upon by carnal men, to the loss of the soul. Consider,

2. Does not the world forbid the banns of marriage between the soul and Christ? Does it not break the treaty, and tell you it is too dear a bargain to forsake all for his sake? Many will follow Christ and religion in the time of prosperity, but when Christ and the world part, and his followers are exposed to persecution, they show which side they love most.

3. Does not the world distract and hinder men in the service and worship of God? Though you draw nigh to God in ordinances with your bodies and lips, are not your hearts going after covetousness? One is thinking of yesterday's business, and another of what he is to do to-morrow. Worldly affairs must be attended to, but let it be at proper times, and mind that first which is of most importance. Consider,

4. Can you take content in the world? If so, you are not of God. When your outward comforts abound, you may be ready to say, with the rich man in the gospel, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" then it proves, you "are adulterers and adulteresses: for know ye not that the friendship of the

world is enmity with God?" The world will fail you in your greatest need, and what will you do with all your riches in the hour of death, when your soul must be separated from your body? Yet you venture to swim over the sea of God's wrath for this world, which, after all, proves but like a mouthful of water that cannot satisfy your thirst. Fools that men are, to venture on eternal misery for a little pleasure!

Let us use this doctrine by way of trial. God hath "set apart him that is godly for himself."

1. The main care of those who are delivered from this present evil world is, to please God and serve him. They take no thought what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed; but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, knowing that all these things shall be added unto them. "Cast your care upon God, for he careth for you."

2. They are delivered from the fear of the world. A Christian does not fear the men of the world, neither is he afraid of losing the world; but can say, if God call for it, let it go. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread," Isa. viii. 13. Mind your souls and serve God, then fear not the world.

3. They are delivered from the love of the world. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. Inquire, is your love set on the world above? Are you troubled that you lose the favour of this world? Do you delight most in the company of God? To conclude, try yourselves by these things. (1.) Do you like the world so as to forego heaven for it; and would you prefer prosperous profaneness before persecuted godliness? (2.) Are you weaned from the world and weary of it? (3.) Is there any thing that pleases you in the world, except what drops from heaven, and comes as a love-token from your heavenly Father? If you are delivered from this present evil world, you will pity those who have their portion here, and prize communion with God above all other enjoyments. (4.) When worldly thoughts disturb you in religious duties, is it a great burden to you? If you are delivered from the world, then, when your hands are in the world, you will labour to have your heart in heaven. Amen.

SERMON VII.*

A STIMULUS TO DUTY.

HEB. x. 25.

And so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

THE text is an argument to press us to four duties, set down in the foregoing verses. First, to "draw near with a true heart." &c. Nearness to God is a Christian's happiness; but distance from him, the misery of the lost, who are to be "banished from the presence of the Lord." It is good being near to God, both as it respects state and duty; but our care in drawing near to God must be, to see it is with "a true heart;" for God cannot endure a false one. We should also see that we draw near to him in "faith;" for faith unites the soul to God, and the "full assurance of faith" renders it comfortable. It must also be, with "hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience;" for God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. And it must be, with "bodies washed with pure water;" not only with the water of baptism, but a holy conversation. Thus we must study to approach God, because he will approach us ere long to judgment. The second duty is expressed in these words, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," ver. 23. Here we are exhorted to be sure and "hold fast" our faith; by no means to make "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience." We must also maintain "the profession of our faith." We must not think of keeping religion to ourselves, but own Christ in an evil day and amongst an evil generation, or he will disown us. The third duty is contained in ver. 24; "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works;" let us not carp at one another, but provoke to love, to love God and each other, and to maintain good works. Let each one strive to go before another in these commendable duties, to quicken one another, "and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." The fourth duty is, "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together," ver. 25. That is, not scattering one sheep from another, for then you will be the sooner destroyed; but joining together in the work and worship of God, "and so much the more" earnestly and sincerely as ye

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see, by the signs of providence, we are drawing near to the day of Christ.

Doctrine. That the due sight and sense of the approaching of the day of the Lord, should be a spur to quicken us to our duty.

In the consideration of this truth we shall,

I. Show what that day is which is here spoken of. There are four remarkable days mentioned in scripture, and of which we should take notice.

1. The day of grace. It is called a day by way of eminence, and may be considered either as to the rising or setting of the gospel sun.

(1.) As it respects the rising of the gospel sun. When persons have been in ignorance and darkness, and the sun of the gospel appears, it is time for men to bestir themselves; "It is now high time to awake out of sleep; the night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light," Rom. xiii. 11, 12. You have had a day of light and gospel grace; for shame! get you out of the bed of sloth and security, and set yourselves to the work of God in good earnest; "Let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober; for they that sleep, sleep in the night," 1 Thess. v. 6, 7. It is very unbecoming persons professing the name of God to be secure and sinful; "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent," Acts xvii. 30. Betake yourselves to work while the day of grace continues, lest you miss the benefit of it, which will be a dreadful loss. Hast thou been twenty, or thirty years, under the means of grace and no better for it? God may justly let thee alone in darkness, and never suffer the light of conviction to dart on thee any more; and then, how sad will thy case be!

(2). Consider the day of grace in reference to the setting of the gospel sun. How ought we to be quickened to our duty at such a time! There are as great signs of a gospel eclipse now as ever. Good ministers die, others are in danger of banishment and imprisonment, and perhaps you may never have a call at your door any more; then so much the more as you see this day approaching you should be quickened to your duty; "Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you," John xii. 35. Little do you know how soon the sun of the gospel may set, and God may snatch his ordinances from you, take the kingdom of God from you, and give it to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. The gospel does not tarry long in one place, and if it leave you, it will leave you in worse darkness than ever. Do you think that if a man come to a town or market,

and the men of the place will neither buy any of his precious wares, nor let him alone, but throw stones at him—do you think, he will stay amongst them? So if we will ill-treat God's ministers, persecute those ambassadors of peace, and are generally unprofitable under ordinances, is God likely to continue with us? Will he not pack up and be gone? It is said of Christ concerning Jerusalem, "When he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix. 41, 42. God is threatening to depart from us, then so much the more be quickened to your duty, "As ye see the day approaching." The scriptures mention,

2. A day of vengeance. If the day of gospel light and grace be not improved, it will be followed by a day of vengeance. If "the acceptable year of the Lord" be not regarded, it will be followed by the "day of vengeance of our God," Isa. lxi. 2. When Christ was foretelling the punishment about to be brought on the Jews, for rejecting the gospel, he says, "These be the days of vengeance." "Thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel, an end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land; now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee," Ezek. vii. 2, 3. A day of trouble is coming upon us, after what manner it will be I cannot tell; but the nearer it approaches, the more should we be quickened in our duties. "Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken: give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness; but if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride," Jer. xiii. 15—17. How often have ministers warned people to return to God and confess their sins, but they say, "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement." One thinks to save himself by his riches, and another by turning, but God saith, "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place; and your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand, when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it," Isa. xxviii. 17, 18. The only way is to get into your chambers, draw near to God, "and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Those who trust and fear the Lord, will be safe under his protection, and there only, when the storm cometh. The scriptures tell us,

3. Of the day of death. This will be either the best or

worst day we ever had ; “ The day of one’s death is better,” says Solomon, “ than the day of one’s birth.” It is so to the pious man ; for then he takes leave of all sins, sorrows, and temptations, and that for ever. He then enters into the presence of God to enjoy him and all good perpetually ; but a graceless soul goes from misery to misery, from a state of sin, to a place of suffering for evermore. This day is hastening upon every wicked man, however he may brag and boast of his riches, “ The Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming.” You have seen some of your acquaintance in your assemblies and markets one day, and on the next, laid on a bed of sickness, and soon in the grave. This should remind you of your own death which is approaching ; every grey hair on your head, and every stitch of pain in your body, should put you in mind that your day is approaching. The apostle could say, “ I die daily ;” but alas ! most men put far from them the evil day. Few have present apprehensions of death, or regard due preparations for it ; yet die you must ; and if even you were to live twenty or thirty years, but still be unprepared for death, you will be more unfit for it then, than now. “ If a man die, shall he live again ?” says Job. Will life come again after death to mend matters ? The Jewish Rabbi said to the man that asked him when he should repent, “ Why, the day before you die.” You know not but you may die to-morrow, therefore repentance should be the work of this day ; for if you be found in your sins you are sure to perish ; therefore “ so much the more as you see the day” of death approaching, be concerned to be prepared for it, and consider every day of your life is a day taken from it.

4. The scriptures remind us of the day of judgment. This day approaches and draws near. The day hastens wherein Antichrist shall be destroyed, the Jews called, and the fulness of the Gentiles brought in ; and we know not how soon the day of judgment will succeed. The heavens will then flame over us, the graves be opened, and Christ come with the sound of a trumpet, in great power and glory to judge the world : this day will come, for “ he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness,” but it is unknown to any except God. It is called the last day, the great and notable day, &c. the day of Christ. Such a day is coming in which all your thoughts, words, and actions will be examined, and you must give an account before God ; therefore, as this day approaches, be careful that things are in readiness, and consider when death comes, then your particular judgment will take place ; your soul will then go to God that gave it, to receive a sentence of absolution or condemnation. Let us,

II. Show what those duties are, to which our attention is called by these approaching days.

1. Be sure that you have evidence of your conversion to God. Union to Christ, and faith in him, will alone stand when the days we have mentioned approach. No privileges nor gifts will avail us in the great day of judgment; if we have wrought miracles in the name of Christ, but are not converted to him, he will say to us, "I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity." The day is coming that will discover what you are; you will carry nothing but grace or guilt with you out of this world. If we should then be found out of Christ, not all the angels in heaven, and saints on earth can save us; for God hath said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 3. The scriptures inform us, that Christ will come in "flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus," 2 Thess. i. 8. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless," 2 Pet. iii. 14. Think not to climb up to heaven by any other way than the way of holiness. Plead with God for converting grace, and say, "Lord, turn me and I shall be turned; let me not be condemned with cursers and swearers, and profane sinners. Christ will not plead the cause of that man who has not retained him as an advocate. See then that you are Christians indeed, for to appear before the tribunal of God without a work of grace in the heart will be very terrible.

2. As the great day of judgment approaches, endeavour to obtain assurance of a real change of heart. How dare you go with uncertainties before the tribunal of heaven? If you can rest satisfied when you have no solid evidence of a work of grace in the heart, I fear you have none. There is a degree of assurance to be had, such as the assurance of the understanding, the assurance of faith, the assurance of hope; be not content without this assurance. How comfortable will it be for the soul at Christ's coming to say, Lo! yonder is my Lord and Saviour, whom I love with all my heart, in whom I have hoped, trusted, and believed. The Psalmist could say, "Our God shall come;" so a gracious soul may say, my God is coming; but if you have no hope that God is your God, you have cause to fear. True sincerity hath safety, but assurance hath boldness in meeting the Lord.

3. As the day is approaching, be sincere in all your graces and actions. That day is coming which will declare what kind of work yours is; "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed

by fire," 1 Cor. iii. 13. It will then appear whether your faith be unfeigned, your love sincere, and all your graces of the right stamp. You cannot cheat God; for he "will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts," 1 Cor. iv. 5. Approve your hearts to God; for "a hypocrite cannot stand before him." Do all in sincerity; for what does it signify to have a name to live and be dead, to have lamps of profession, but want the oil of grace? As you love God and your own souls be sincere; pray with sincerity, confess your sins with sincerity, and repent of sin with sincerity; "and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

4. Mortify your lusts. It is equally dangerous to have a lust in our heart, as a lie in our right hand. If you allow any lust in your soul, Christ will send you to the place of torment. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth," Col. iii. 4, 5. Cut off right hand sins, and pluck out right eye lusts; for it is better to be welcomed by Christ into heaven maimed, or having one eye, than to be cast into hell having both hands and eyes. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 2, 3. Hence learn, you must be Puritans, if you would go to heaven: therefore be serious in the mortification of your sins, and hold no correspondence with any lusts, for they are Christ's enemies. If any of your souls be found embracing those lusts which wounded Christ, how sad will your case be!

5. As this day approaches, so much the more should you be careful to have your hearts withdrawn from the world. What an insignificant thing will this world appear, when Christ comes to judgment! Then all this world's goods, for which men have laboured so earnestly, will be consumed with fire. Strive to get above the world, for the higher you ascend towards God and Christ, the more will the world dwindle in your affection: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matt. xvi. 26. When the "Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; then he shall reward every man according to his works;" not according to his silver and gold. O sirs! "The time is short; it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this

world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away," 1 Cor. vii. 29—31. If you be Christians, then live as such, and say as Paul, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world:" the world cares nothing for me, nor I for it.

6. Endeavour to be valiant in your actings for God, in the way of duty, notwithstanding the difficulties you may meet with. Thus St. Paul exclaims, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy."—"I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus," Acts xx. 24, and xxi. 13. O blessed, heroic spirit! The apostle James says, "Be ye also patient, establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh," James v. 8. Be resolute in the work of God, and fear not men; they are not to be masters of your conscience now, because they are not to be your judges hereafter. God's will must be your rule, act in reverence to him in all you do, and seeing the Lord is coming, "by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality," Rom. ii. 7.

7. As the day approaches wherein the Lord will come to judge the world, meet him by the actings of faith and love. Faith beholds him that is invisible, sees Christ coming in the clouds to judgment, and excites love to him; "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. Labour to live more by faith in Christ, and "to love his appearing."—"The just shall live by faith," and can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12.

8. As the day of the Lord approaches, seek after progress in sanctification and grace. This was the desire of the apostle Paul, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead;" that is, I desire by any means, whether ordinances or providences, to possess so much holiness as I must have at the resurrection of the dead. I wish to grow every day better, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after;—I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark," Phil. iii. 11—14.

9. Be careful to improve your talents and prepare your accounts, and so much the more as the reckoning "day approaches." We all have our talents, and Christ saith, "Occupy

till I come." To one, he has given health and strength ; to another, wealth and estate ; to another, wit and knowledge ; to another, ordinances and means of grace : these are to be improved for the good of our own souls and those of others. He will soon say, "Give an account of thy stewardship ; for thou mayest be no longer steward," Luke xvi. 2. How will you give your account of all the sermons you have heard, and the various talents you have enjoyed ? It is said, "every one of us shall give account of himself to God," and "every man shall bear his own burden." Be serious therefore in making up your accounts. When at the Lord's supper remember, this ordinance shows the Lord will come, and that you should be prepared.

10 As the day approaches, so much the more do you stand upon your watch. "Watch therefore ; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," Matt. xxiv. 42. "The end of all things is at hand : be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer," 1 Pet. iv. 7. Suppose the heavens were all on flame, the graves opening, the earth trembling, and Christ coming to judgment, would you not then fall a praying ? Do it now then, before it be too late. Watch against the world, the flesh, and the devil, lest you be deceived and ruined by them.

11. Maintain christian communion one with another. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," through worldly business, fear of scorn, or contempt from men. You would not be thought Puritans, and through fear of persecution would be careless of these duties, but forsake them not whatever you may suffer here. Christ is coming and will repay ; he will not let you lose any thing by what you are called to endure, especially when labouring to do good to men's souls.

Finally, Deny yourselves, and act faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Were you to do all that is required of you, you are but "unprofitable servants, and have done that which was your duty to do." All our righteousness is but as dung, and dross, and filthy rags ; and our iniquities like the wind would take us away. We should say with Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 8, 9. I am conscious, saith a gracious soul, that I have missed it in every thing ; that I must put on the garment of Christ's righteousness ; for it must appear for me at the tribunal of God, or I cannot be justified. Let it be your prayer then, that Christ may be to you, "wisdom, and

righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" And again, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight, shall no man living be justified." We can be justified only by faith in Christ Jesus: therefore let us get out of ourselves and rely wholly upon Christ. It is true we must be judged according to our works; but are not accepted with God or saved for our works. When we have done all, we must deny ourselves, and act faith on our Lord Jesus Christ. If we have been quickened and enlarged in any duty, we must be thankful and bless God; though we must not trust in it, but in Christ Jesus our Lord.

SERMON VIII.*

BELIEVERS SAFE AND COMFORTABLE.

JOB XIX. 25—27.

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.

It was the desire of our loving neighbour and dear brother, Mr. Eaton, whose wearisome pilgrimage God hath graciously finished, that he might be buried amongst us, and that I would preach a sermon to the living: this his desire he expressed to me some years ago, but did not mention any particular portion of scripture which was in his thoughts as the subject of the sermon requested. I understand that he continued in this desire to his

* This sermon was preached on the death of the Rev. Samuel Eaton, and is extracted from Dr. Rippon's Baptist Annual Register, vol. iv. page 559. Mr. Eaton was a Nonconformist Minister, ejected from Dukinfield, in Cheshire. "He was," says the Nonconformist Memorial, "a very holy man, a person of great learning and judgment, and an incomparable preacher." The following memorandum is prefixed to the sermon—"Denton, Jan. 22, 1694. Upon occasion of the death of Mr. Samuel Eaton, who died Jan. the 9th, and was buried Jan. the 12th; he desired this office of love from me, and appointed this text." The Nonconformist Memorial mentions Dukinfield as being in Lancashire, and Mr. Eaton as having died in 1664.

dying day, and of late singled out, and mentioned these memorable words of Job; those words which Job, in the midst of his affliction, so earnestly desired might be transmitted to posterity, that they might be written, and graven with a pen and lead in a rock, that they might abide for ever; in which he doth fully clear his own uprightness, and has left a legacy to the church. This portion of scripture he fitly pitched upon as a believer, one that had drank of Job's cup of affliction and consolation. He drank in large measure of Job's cup of affliction: he was much afflicted in his estate in the time of the former bishops; he was so afflicted in his body, liberty, friends, good name, oft times and many ways troubled and grieved in his spirit. Among his many afflictions, I observed that two especially affected his spirits.

One, the great wrong that was done him in his good name, not by enemies but friends; he might truly say with Job, verse 19 of this chapter, "They whom I loved are turned against me;" and with the best of men, and our Saviour, "False witnesses did rise up, they laid to my charge things that I knew not," Psalm xxxv. 11.

The other was the loss of his speech, whereby he was unfitted to serve God and his church as formerly; yet when the Lord had humbled him and proved him, he cleared his innocency, and restored to him some measure of usefulness. Blessed be his name, he drunk of Job's cup of consolation, he had the testimony of his conscience on his side, when he was afflicted, and accused, and reproached; he knew the grounds of his comfort, and had grace given him to apply the same, and therewith to comfort himself, as Job did, in the midst of, and above all his afflictions, as appears in the most full and comfortable profession of his faith: he did fitly pitch upon this portion of scripture to be spoken of to the church after his decease. If we consider him as a minister of the gospel, hereby he took a course that the church might be put in mind of the doctrine he preached, which he believed, professed, lived and died in, that they might be encouraged in their faith, profession, and practice of it. There are several articles of our faith included in these words, which I cannot speak of particularly in a sermon; but that which I shall propose in the general, is, to explain two main things held out in these verses.

I. Job's safe state in the midst of his afflictions.

II. His comfortable state amidst his sorrows and vexations of spirit.

1. Job's state was safe for the present, notwithstanding his sins; he was afflicted in his estate, friends, body, name; yet a safe man, for he had a Redeemer, a kinsman, an elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, who had right and power to redeem him

from sin and affliction, Psalm cxxx. 7; therefore he shall be saved. See Job xiii. 15, 16.

2. His safe state for after time; his Redeemer liveth as God, in his essence, God blessed for ever; and as man, though he died, yet he rose again, and dieth no more, Rev. i. 18, therefore he is ever a Redeemer to him.

(1.) He would be safe though death should separate soul and body, and he could live no longer than his appointed time on earth, to behold men and worship God, yet his Redeemer liveth, death could not separate him from the love of Christ, Rom. viii. 38; it could not dissolve this union; Christ would take care that his soul should enter into peace, and his body rest in the most soft, sweet, and safe bed of the grave. Isa. lvii. 1, 2.

(2.) He is safe in the grave; his Redeemer liveth to preserve the precious dust of his body, that none of it be lost. Not the least particle of the dust of his redeemed, sanctified body, (a member of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Ghost) shall be lost. 1 Cor. vi. 19.

(3.) He will be safe at the resurrection; his Redeemer liveth to raise his body out of the dust, to unite it to his own soul, and make it like to his glorious body. John vi. 39. Phil. iii. 21.

(4.) He will be safe in the day of judgment, safe from condemnation; his Redeemer liveth, he shall be his Judge, as God hath appointed. Acts x. 36, 42.

II. As his safe state in all his afflictions is here manifest, so his comfortable state in all his sorrows; for he knew by faith,

1. That he had a living Redeemer; he did not only know by a historical faith that there was a Messiah, (a promised seed, in whom all nations were to be blessed, typified in sacrifices, promised to Adam and Abraham, Gal. iii. 7, 8.) but he knew by a justifying faith that he was his Redeemer. As Abraham believed, Gen. xv. 6. Job believed the same promise, Job xiii. 18, his conscience told him he had accepted Christ for his Redeemer, and trusted in him, though he should slay him, ver. 15, and he knew it was sincere trust, not presumption, by the uprightness of his heart, v. 15, 16, and by the effects of it, as, (1.) It worked by love; he served God for love, and not for wages. (2.) It purified his heart, and cleansed his way, Job iii. 4; he feared God, eschewed evil. (3.) It made him the pattern of patience. (4.) It strengthened him in temptations from Satan, the world, friends; so that he kept the way of God, and was not discouraged, but held on till God finished his temptations.—Though he himself was in a dying condition, and did expect death daily, yet his comfort was, that his Redeemer did live, and should live for ever.

2. He knew by faith that his Redeemer should stand in the

latter days upon the earth ; in the days of the gospel, he should assume the nature of man, and live upon the earth, that he might obey and suffer, die and rise again, and ascend to heaven for his redemption ; and at the last day he should come from heaven to judgment, when he should be justly judged, and cleared, though he was now unjustly accused, and judged to be a hypocrite, a deceiver, a wicked man, and so afflicted by God. This last judgment was prophesied of by Enoch, before Christ's time, Jude, 14, 15. Abraham also believed God to be the Judge of all the world, Gen. xviii. 25, even God the Son, who appeared to him and others in a human shape, as a forerunner of his incarnation. This was Job's comfort, that after all misjudgings and censurings were past, there should be a last judgment, and all by his Redeemer.

3. He knew by faith, that though his body at present was much worn and wasted with affliction, and nothing left but skin and bone, though after death his body should be wholly consumed within and without, yet he should be restored ; his skin, flesh, bones, eyes, the self-same body that had so suffered, laid in the grave, consumed, though ere long he should be seen, censured no more, yet, when Christ comes, he should appear with him in a glorious body, in perfect health, strength, and beauty ; this corruption will put on incorruption. Col. iii. 4.

4. He knew by faith, that in his body, restored and glorified, he should see his Redeemer's glorified body, even with those eyes that had seen so much affliction. What a glorious, transporting sight will that be ! to see the body of his Redeemer, which suffered so much, so painful a death for him ; and that with the eyes of his understanding he should see God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost : he shall see him face to face, know him as he is known, have perfect knowledge of him. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. "Be blessed, and be like him," Matt. v. 8. 1 John iii. 2.

Job was confirmed in his faith by God's translating Enoch, Gen. v. 24, and by God's preparing an ark, and shutting up Noah in it, a figure of the eternal salvation of believers signified and sealed by baptism, 1 Pet. iii. 21. This most comfortable truth of seeing God in glory, and enjoying him, the saints of old were acquainted with ; the patriarchs were pilgrims here, and sought a heavenly country, Heb. xi. 9, 10, 14. Moses desired by faith to see God's glory, Exod. xxxiii. 18 ; but God told him, that mercy was reserved for another life.

David, Psalm xv. and xxiv. describeth the man that shall ascend into God's hill, read also Ps. xvi. and xvii. This is the completion of our happiness. 1 Thess. iv. 17.

Application.—We have seen the safety and comfortableness

of Job's state, in the midst of his afflictions and sorrows, clearly deduced from these verses, in which he makes a confession of his faith, which is also a profession of his integrity, and an encouragement against the false judging of his friends. Our dear brother deceased made the same profession of the same faith, in his afflictions, and desired it might be made known to the church after his decease, and by it he being dead, yet speaketh, with believing Abel, to his neighbours, friends, all in civil and spiritual relation to him, in this manner :—

1. I leave you in this my last sermon, for a memorial, the sum of that doctrine I have been taught in the church of God, have believed, professed, practised, and many years preached to you, in which I have lived and died, that ye may remember it, hold it fast, live and die in it: some articles of it are these following: (1.) That all men, even the best of men, are sinful and miserable, and cannot redeem themselves, but need a Redeemer. (2.) That God, passing by fallen angels, hath provided a Redeemer for mankind, his own Son, God and man, one that is willing, for he is a Redeemer in name and office; able also, a living Redeemer, life itself, able to overcome death and bestow happiness. (3.) This Redeemer is not for all men, but for particular persons, such as have grace given them to believe, to accept of Christ, and appropriate him, conscious that they need a Redeemer. (4.) That particular believers may, in the use of God's means, in an ordinary way, attain to assurance that Christ is their Redeemer, not only to a good hope, but certainty of faith.—(5.) That though the redeemed die, yet they do not perish; there is a resurrection; the same bodies which they lay down shall rise again. (6.) That Christ, the Redeemer of his people, shall come at last to judge the world. (7.) That after the resurrection, and day of judgment, the redeemed shall have a glorious and blessed sight of their Redeemer, both in body and soul.

2. You have been all baptized into this one faith; you have been taught it, have embraced it, professed it; you all agree in the substantial and saving doctrines of faith, having been partakers of the holy supper, whereby you have been confirmed in faith; see that you live in love, that you bear one another's burdens and infirmities, and fulfil the law of Christ.

3. I have gone before you in a way of patience as well as of obedience; my afflictions, with holy Job, have been many and great, some of long continuance. I have been afflicted in my estate, body, spirit, friends, name; that which hath been my support and comfort in all my afflictions, is faith in a Redeemer, that my sins are forgiven through his blood, that he hath redeemed me from the evil of all afflictions; that by him I shall be redeemed out of all sin and misery, from death and the

grave; and he will not leave me till he bring me to the blessed sight of God in glory: and this faith will be your comfort in like afflictions.

4. I have, as you know, been dying many years, and, at my appointed time, departed from among you, as well as others. I, your neighbour, friend, pastor, can speak no more to you, can pray no more for you, can converse no more with you, can walk no more amongst you; but my Redeemer and your Redeemer liveth, to do all these offices of love for you; he liveth to bring to your remembrance my doctrine, examples, counsels, admonitions; to bless the word I have preached to you, to answer the prayers I have put up to God for you; he will raise up living instruments for your instruction, support, and comfort; his Spirit liveth to be an instructor and comforter; the word liveth to be the food of your spiritual life; there shall be living ordinances, living and life-cherishing societies of redeemed ones, with which, if you hold communion, both in public and private, you shall find your spiritual life maintained and increased.

5. I die in an evil time, and leave you and the church of God in great and general affliction—I, by the goodness of God, notwithstanding all my enemies, die in my own house and bed, and come to my grave in peace, according to my heart's desire. I have lived to see evils come upon the church I expected not: but what you may live to see, I know not. You may drink deeper of the cup of affliction than I have done. Be of good comfort; I leave you this living comfort—your Redeemer liveth, and will redeem you out of all, as he hath done me.—He gives life and being to all afflictions, and instruments of them, even the greatest, and takes it away at his pleasure. He outlives them all; “and because he lives, ye shall live also,” and outlive them, John xiv. 19.

6. Some of you, to whom I have preached, and with whom I have walked, have greatly distressed my heart, with your errors in doctrine, and disorderly walking, your scandals and divisions. Some of you have returned me evil for good, and hatred for my good will; have filled me with reproaches; some of you have remained under censures, and have not repented.—These things have grieved me, and sent me often to heaven with a sad heart; even to my living Redeemer, that he would redeem you from sin, and me from sorrow. It may be, when I am at rest in my grave, and turned to dust, you may remember these things, and be grieved for your sins against God, and wrongs done to me. If you repent, and believe in your Redeemer, whom I have preached to you, and to whom I have poured out my grieved heart, he will redeem you from all your sins, and from the harm of all the smarting afflictions you may meet with, and

I shall give up my accounts concerning you with joy. But be sure, I say be sure of this, that you do not meet me before the living Redeemer at the last day, in a state of impenitency : how sad, O how sad will it be, if my merciful Redeemer be your severe judge !

2. We may collect hence, from Job's confession of faith, and the safety and comfortableness of his state, included therein, the great loss sustained when those die who are like Job, eminent in station and grace, who have such faith in Christ, and upon just occasions profess it : for, (1.) They do greatly honour God in the world ; what an honour was this to God, that in a time of hardest trials, when Satan was let loose upon Job, and he was under all sorts of affliction, when God dealt with him as an enemy, and all his comforters judged him to be a hypocrite in religion, and a notorious sinner, that then he should believe God to be his Redeemer, comfort himself in him, boldly profess his faith in him, and not be drawn to speak evil of him, or decline his way, but should keep his hold of God though beaten off.

(2.) They have interest in Christ as a Redeemer, therefore he hath a special care of them in evil times ; there is more hope, therefore, in dangerous times, sinful times, while they are living ; God hath respect to their persons, prayers, presence ; in any place we know not of what use one of them may be, to continue mercies, keep off evils : much more many ; the hope is less, and danger is greater when they are removed.

(3.) They are understanding and knowing persons, conversant with the mysteries of religion, able to instruct others concerning Christ the Redeemer, his divine and human nature, concerning the resurrection, day of judgment, vision of God in glory ; there is a loss of spiritual instructors, and the greater loss of these that have been authorized by God and richly qualified for the work.

(4.) Having access to the sources of consolation they are enabled by grace to comfort themselves and others, in many, and great afflictions : they are acquainted with God's promises of comfort, they have had experience of the power of them in their own souls, and can comfort others from their own experience of the power of them in themselves ; there is a loss of comforters.

Let us all be stirred up after the example of holy Job, to give diligence to attain the assurance of faith, that we may be able to say, particularly, My Redeemer liveth. We are sure of sin, guilt, and affliction more or less ; of death and judgment, and shall we not get assurance of a Redeemer ? give diligence for assurance, take a right course : 1. Be convinced of your sin and misery that you need a Redeemer. 2. Labour to know this Redeemer God hath provided, in his person, nature, offices.—

3. Consider and meditate upon the general offer of the gospel ; Christ is willing to be thy Redeemer, he offers himself to thee, if thou wilt accept of him. 4. Accept him therefore, be willing he should redeem thee from the law of sin, service of it, guilt and condemnation of it. 5. Pray earnestly for assurance ; search thyself narrowly, whether thou hast not accepted of Christ. Where Christ is a Redeemer, the effects of his redemption will appear ; for instance, 1. Thou wilt love Christ as a Redeemer, thy soul will be endeared to him ; heretofore thou lovedst sin, now Christ that loved thee and gave himself for thee. 2. Thou praisest Christ as a Redeemer, art greatly thankful to him, Oh ! what a kindness hath he done thee ; what a tyrant was sin, a slave thou wast to it. 3. Thou dost earnestly desire more of the power of Christ's redemption, more power against sin, it grieves thy soul when sin puts up its head ; thou complainest to thy Redeemer. 4. Thou wilt assuredly love and long for perfect redemption, Rom. vii. 24. 2 Tim. iv. 8.

Where Christ is accepted there is the seal of the Spirit, the graces of the Spirit, Eph. i. 13.

Where the soul bears fruit to God it is undoubtedly married to Christ, Rom. vii. 4.

It will necessarily follow, from the example of Job's safe and comfortable condition, when having this knowledge of a Redeemer, that the state of all those that have not this faith in a Redeemer must be dangerous and uncomfortable : they see no need, they have not sought after him, have no interest in him ; sin hath power over them, to command them : afflictions do them hurt. hence many that were troubled about their sins in afflictions, are worse after ; death will have power over them, as God's executioner to force their souls out of their bodies ; the grave shall have power over them, as God's prison to hold them in prison-chains till the great assize ; the resurrection shall have power over them, to raise them, against their wills, as God's jailor, to bring them before the judge ; and then he that would have been their gracious Redeemer, shall be their terrible judge ; their own consciences, witnesses ; and God's redeemed ones, whose hearts were grieved with their sins, also witnesses against them ; ministers who have proclaimed a Redeemer shall testify against them ; and God himself shall acknowledge their witness to be true ; and they having nothing to say for themselves, shall be cast and condemned. This shall aggravate their misery, that a Redeemer was offered—they refused him ; loved sin and perdition more than Christ and redemption. They shall see the redeemed go with Christ into glory, while themselves are thrust with Satan, into everlasting fire.