

covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.' Is there any likelihood of deceit there. Corrupt nature is always devising one shift or another wherein to harden conscience. Idolaters; it is dangerous not to be right in worship. The covetous cometh in, Gal. v. 5, 'Nor covetous man, who is an idolater: let no man deceive you; for because of these things, the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.' We think it a small matter. All liars; not only the gross liar, but the heretic; as heresy is called a lie: it is good to keep to the pattern of sound words. The hypocrite's hell is his portion: Mat. xxiv. 51, 'Appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Hypocrisy, it is a practical lie.

SERMON XXVII.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.—MAT. XXV. 46.

THE words are a conclusion of a notable scheme and draft which Christ gives us of the last judgment. In that day there will be—(1.) A congregation; (2.) A segregation; (3.) A discussion of the cause; (4.) A solemn doom and sentence, both of absolution and condemnation; (5.) And, lastly, execution, without which the whole process of that day would be but a solemn and useless pageantry. The execution is in the text; wherein observe—

First, A distinction of the persons; *these* and *the righteous*. See the last sermon on 2 Cor. v. 10.

Secondly, As there are different persons, so different recompenses. See 2 Cor. v. 10.

Thirdly, Observe, these different recompenses are dispensed with respect to the different qualifications and state of the persons judged, as their case shall appear upon trial, according to their works. Some are wicked, and others righteous: God must needs deal differently with them—

1. To show the holiness of his nature. The holy God delighteth in holiness and holy persons, and hateth sin and the workers of iniquity; and therefore will not deal with the one as he dealeth with the other. Both parts of his holiness are spoken of in scripture, his delight in holy things and persons. See the fourth sermon on 2 Cor. v. 10.

2. The righteousness of his government requireth that there should be a different proceeding with the godly and the wicked; that every man should reap according to what he hath sown, whether he hath sown according to the flesh or the spirit; that the fruit of his doings should be given into his bosom. And this, though it be not evident in this life, where good and evil is promiscuously dispensed, because now is the time of God's patience and our trial, yet, in the life to come, when God will judge the world in righteousness, Acts xvii. 31,

it is necessary that it should go well with the good and ill with the bad; or, as the apostle saith, 2 Thes. i. 6, 7, 'It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you that are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels.' Mark, both parts of the recompense belong to the righteousness of his government, to give rest to the troubled, as well as tribulation to the troublers. Indeed, with the one he dealeth in strict justice; to the other he dispenseth a reward of grace. Yet that also belongeth to his righteousness; that is, his new-covenant righteousness; for so it is said, Heb. vi. 10, 'God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love;' as he hath bound himself by gracious promise to give life and glory to the penitent, obedient, and faithful.

3. The graciousness of his rewarding mercy and free love to his faithful servants. Though they were involved in the same condemnation with others as to their original and first estate, and the merit of their evil actions, and the constant imperfection of their best works; yet since it was the sincere bent of their hearts to serve and honour God, he will give them a crown of life. They might have perished everlastingly, as others do, if God should enter into a strict judgment with them. But when others receive the fruit of their doings, he dealeth graciously with them, pardoning their failings, and accepting them in the Beloved. God is not bound in justice, from the right and merit of their actions, to reward them that have done him most faithful service, but merely of his grace upon the account of Christ: 1 Peter i. 13, 'Hoping unto the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ;' and Jude 21, 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life;' and 2 Tim. i. 18, 'The Lord grant that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day,' namely, when the Lord shall judge the quick and the dead, and shall distribute punishments and rewards. In some measure we see grace here, but never so fully and perfectly as then.

[1.] Partly because now we have not so full a view of our unworthiness as when our actions are scanned, and all things are brought to light whether they be good or evil. And—

[2.] Partly because there is not so full and large a manifestation of God's favour now, as there is in our full and final reward. It is grace now that he is pleased to pass by our offences, and to take us into his family, and give us some taste of his love, and a right to his heavenly kingdom; but then it is another manner of grace and favour, when our pardon shall be pronounced by our Judge's own mouth, and he shall not only take us into his family, but into his immediate presence and heavenly palace; not only give us a right, but possession: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you;' and shall not only have some remote service and ministration, but be everlastingly employed in loving, and delighting in, and praising of God. This is grace indeed. The grace of God, or his free favour to sinners, is never seen in all its glory or graciousness till then. And it is the more amplified, when we see how God dealeth with others, who as to natural endowments were every way as acceptable as ourselves; and, as to spirituals, grace alone making the difference.

Fourthly, Observe, first, the wicked are described by sins of omission; as ver. 42, 43. 'Those that have not visited, not clothed, not fed, not harboured; these shall go into everlasting punishment. But the righteous, by their faithfulness in good works, or acts of self-denying obedience, shall go into life eternal.

1. The wicked by their omission of necessary duties. Because we think omissions no sins, or light sins, I shall take this occasion to show the heinousness of them. Sins are commonly distinguished into—(1.) Sins of omission; and (2.) Sins of commission.

[1.] A sin of commission is when we do those things which we ought not to do.

[2.] A sin of omission is when we leave undone those things which we ought to do. But when we look more narrowly into these things, we shall find both in every actual sin; for in that we commit anything against the law of God, we omit our duty; and the omitting of our duty can hardly fall out but that something is preferred before the love of God; and that is a commission. But yet there is a ground for the distinction; because when anything is directly and formally against the negative precept and prohibition, that is a sin of commission; but when we directly sin against an affirmative precept, that is an omission. An instance we have in Eli and his sons. Eli's sons 'defiled themselves with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,' 1 Sam. ii. 22; but Eli himself sinned in that 'he restrained them not,' 1 Sam. iii. 13. His sin was an omission; their sin was a commission. Now, that sins of commission may be great sins, appeareth—

(1.) Partly by the nature of them; for there is in them the general nature of all sin. It is *ἀνομία*, 1 John iii. 4, a transgression of a law, or a disobedience to God; and so, by consequence, a contempt of his authority. We cry out upon Pharaoh when we hear him saying, Exod. v. 2, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?' And by interpretation we all say so. This language is in every sin we commit, and in every duty we omit. Our negligence is not simple negligence, but downright disobedience; because it is the breach of an express precept and charge which God hath given us. Now when we make no reckoning of it, we do in effect say, 'Who is the the Lord, that I should obey him?' There may be much disobedience in a bare omission. When Saul had not done what God bade him to do, he telleth him, 'That rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry,' 1 Sam. xv. 23; implying that omission to be stubbornness and rebellion, parallel to idolatry and witchcraft.

(2.) By the causes. In the general, corrupt nature; but the particular causes are—

(1st.) Idleness. They do not stir up themselves, Isa. lxiv. 7.

(2dly.) Security, Jer. ii. 31, 32.

(3dly.) Want of love to God: Isa. xliii. 22, 'But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel;' Rev. ii. 4, 'Nevertheless I have something against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.' And—

(4thly.) Zeal for his glory: 'Not slothful in business, but fervent

in spirit, serving the Lord,' Rom. xii. 11. Where there is a fervour, we cannot be idle and neglectful of our duty.

(3.) By the effects; and they are—

(1st.) Internal. There is a sad withering: 1 Thes. v. 19, 'Quench not the Spirit.' Or—

(2d.) External. It bringeth on many temporal judgments. God puts by Saul from being king for a sin of omission: 1 Sam. xv. 11, 'It repenteth me for setting up Saul to be king; for he hath not done the thing which I commanded him.' For this he puts by Eli's house from the priesthood: 1 Sam. iii. 13, 'I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.' That omission was not total; for he reproved them, but did not punish them.

(3d.) Eternal: Mat. xxv. 30, 'Cast the unprofitable servant into utter darkness.' So Mat. vii. 19, 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire;' if it bringeth not forth good fruit, though not bad or poisonous fruit. For these sins Christ condemneth the wicked in the text. By all these arguments it appeareth that sins of omission may be great sins. But—

2. That some sins of omission are greater than others. All are not alike. As—

[1.] The more necessary the duties are: Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' &c.; 1 Cor. xvi. 22, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.' These are *peccata contra remedium*, as others are *contra officium*. By other sins we make the wound; by these we refuse the plaster.

[2.] If the omission be total: Jer. x. 25, 'Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name;' Ps. xiv. 2, 'None seeketh after God.'

[3.] If a duty be seasonable; the feeding the hungry, &c., as ver. 44, 'When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger?' &c.; and 1 John iii. 17, 'He that hath this world's good, and seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?'

[4.] When it is easy. This is to stand with God for a trifle: Luke xvi. 24, 'And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' *Desideravit guttam, qui non dedit micam.*

[5.] When convinced: James iv. 17, 'Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.'

3. In many cases, sins of omission may be more heinous and damning than sins of commission. They are the ruin of the most part of the carnal world. They are described to be 'without God,' Eph. ii. 12. Of the wicked within the pale it is said, Ps. x. 3, 4, 'The wicked, through the pride of his heart, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts.' Of the careless professor, Jer. ii. 32, 'My people have forgotten me days without number.' Sins of omission may be more heinous than sins of commission—

[1.] Partly because these harden more. Foul sins scourge the conscience with remorse and shame, but these bring on insensibly slight-

ness and hardness of heart. And therefore Christ saith, 'Publicans and harlots should enter into the kingdom of God' before Pharisees that neglected faith, love, and judgment, Mat. xxi. 31.

[2.] Partly because omissions make way for commissions: Ps. xiv. 4, they that 'called not upon God, did eat up his people as bread.' They lie open to gross sins that do not keep the heart tender by a daily attendance upon God. If a man do not that which is good, he will soon do that which is evil. Oh! then, let us bewail our unprofitableness, that we do no more good, that we do so much neglect God, that we do no more edify our neighbour, so that God's best gifts lie idle upon our hands. That child is counted undutiful that doth wrong and beat his father; so also he that giveth him not due reverence. How seldom do we think of God! Every relation puts new duties upon us, but we little regard them; every gift, every talent.

Again, secondly, 'The godly by their fruitfulness in good works, and acts of self-denying obedience. They fed, they refreshed, they harboured, they clothed, they visited, ver. 35, 36. The question is not, Have you heard, prayed, preached? These are disclaimed: Mat. vii. 22, 'Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity;' Luke xiii. 26, 'Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets; but he shall say, I tell you, I know you not; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.' Nay, nor have you believed: James ii. 20, 'Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?' No; Christ telleth us of another trial. Well, then, a religion that costs nothing is worth nothing. A notional religion, a word religion, is not a christianity of Christ's making. Surely heaven is worth something, and it will cost us something if we mean to get thither. There is more in these works of costly charity than we usually think of, 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19; Luke xvi. 9; 1 John iv. 19, 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.' Hereby; by what? 'If we love not in word and tongue only, but in deed and in truth.' Refresh the bowels of the poor, own brethren though with danger of our lives. Heaven is but a fancy to them that will venture nothing for the hopes of it. What have you done to show your thankfulness for so great a mercy tendered to you? A cold belief and a fruitless profession will never yield you comfort. Good words are not dear, and a little countenance given to religion costs no great matter; and therefore do not think that religion lieth only in hearing sermons, or a few cursory prayers and drowsy devotions. We should mind those things about which we shall be questioned at the day of judgment. Have you visited, fed, clothed, harboured, owned the servants of God, when the world hath frowned on them? Comforted them in their distresses? Wherein really have you denied yourselves for the hopes of glory?

Fifthly, Observe the notions whereby their different estate in the other world is expressed, punishment and life. See sermon last, on 2 Cor. v. 10.

Sixthly, Observe, eternity is affixed to both; everlasting punishment and eternal life. See last sermon on 2 Cor. v. 10.

Seventhly, Observe, these are spoken of not only as threatened, but executed. When the cause hath been sufficiently tried and cleared, and sentence passed, there will be execution. The execution is certain, speedy, and unavoidable. See last sermon on 2 Cor. v. 10.

Eighthly, Observe, sentence is executed on the wicked first. It beginneth with them, for it is said, 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.' Now this is not merely because the order of the narration did so require it. See last sermon on 2 Cor. v. 10.

The *Use* is to press us—(1.) To believe these things; (2.) Seriously to consider of them.

1. To believe them. Most men's faith about the eternal recompenses is but pretended, at best too cold and speculative, an opinion rather than a sound belief, as appeareth by the little fruit and effect that it hath upon us; for if we had such a sight of them as we have of other things, we should be other manner of persons than we are, in all holy conversation and godliness. We see how cautious man is in tasting meat in which he doth suspect harm, that it will breed in him the pain and torments of the stone and gout or cholic; I say, though it be but probable the things will do us any hurt. We know certainly that 'the wages of sin is death,' yet we will be tasting forbidden fruit. If a man did but suspect a house were falling, he would not stay in it an hour. We know for certain that continuance in a carnal estate will be our eternal ruin; yet who doth flee from wrath to come? If we have but a little hope of gain, we will take pains to obtain it. We know that 'our labour is not in vain in the Lord.' Why do we not 'abound in his work'? 1 Cor. xv. 58. Surely we would do more to prevent this misery, to obtain this happiness, when we may do it upon such easy terms, and have so fair an opportunity in our hands; if we were not strangely stupefied, we would not go to hell to save ourselves a labour. There are two things which are very wondrous:—

[1.] That any should suspect the christian faith, so clearly promised in the predictions of the prophets before it was set afoot, and confirmed with such a number of miracles after it was set afoot; received among the nations with so universal a consent in the learned part of the world, notwithstanding the meanness of the instruments first employed in it, and perpetuated to us throughout so many successions of ages, who have had experience of the truth and benefit of it;—that now in the latter end of time, any should suspect this faith, and think it a fond credulity, is a wonder indeed.

[2.] But a greater wonder by far is it that any should embrace the christian faith and yet live sinfully; that they should believe as christians, and yet live as atheists. You cannot drive a dull ass into the fire that is kindled before him: 'Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird.' How can men believe eternal torments, and yet with so much boldness and easiness run into the sins that do deserve them? Many times they are not compelled by any terror, nor asked by any tempter, nor invited by any temptation; but of their own accord seek out occasions of their ruin. On the other side, can a man

believe heaven and do nothing for it? If we know that it will not be lost labour, there is all the reason we should not grudge at it.

2. Seriously consider of these things. The scripture everywhere calleth for consideration: Ps. l. 22, 'Consider this, ye that forget God;' Isa. i. 3, 'My people will not consider.' Many that have faith do not set it a-work by lively thoughts. Knowledge is asleep, and differeth little from ignorance and oblivion, till consideration awaken it. If we were at leisure to think of eternity, it would do us good to think of this double motive—that every man must be judged to everlasting joy or everlasting torment. These things are propounded for our benefit and instruction. We are guarded on both sides; we have the bridle of fear and the spur of hope. If God had only terrified us from sin by mentioning inexpressible pains and horrors, we might be frightened, and stand at a distance from it; but when we have such encouragements to good, and God propoundeth such unspeakable joys, this should quicken our diligence. If God had only promised heaven, and threatened no hell, wicked men would count it no great matter to lose heaven, provided that they might be annihilated; but seeing there is both, and both for ever, shall we be cold and dead? We are undone for ever if wicked, blessed for ever if godly. What should we not do that we may be everlastingly blessed, and avoid everlasting misery?

Well, then, let this be considered by us seriously and often and deeply, that everlasting woe and weal is in the case. Meat well chewed nourisheth the more, but being swallowed whole breedeth crudities; so when we swallow truths without rumination or consideration, we do not feel the virtue of them; they do not excite our diligence, nor break the force of temptations: 'Oh! that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end,' Deut. xxxii. 29. I have read of a prodigal prince, that when he had given away a huge sum of money, they laid all the money into a heap before him, that he might see and consider what he had given away, to bring him to retract, or in part to lessen the grant. So it is good for us to consider what we lose in losing eternity, what we part with for these vile and perishing things.