

Use 2. Do we believe in the Son of God? Here will be the great ease of conscience for settling our eternal interest.

1. If we believe, Christ will be precious to us: 1 Peter ii. 7, 'Unto them which believe, he is precious.' Christ cannot be accepted where he is not valued when other things come in competition with him, and God will not be prodigal of his grace.

2. Where there is true faith, the heart will be purified: Acts xv. 9, 'Purifying their hearts by faith.'

3. If you do believe in Christ, the heart will be weaned from the world: 1 John v. 4, 'For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'

4. If you have the true faith, it works by love: Gal. v. 6, 'For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith, which worketh by love.'

By these things will the case be determined. Then the comfort and sweetness of this truth falls upon your hearts, that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

SERMON. XVII.

See, I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil.—
DEUT. XXX. 15.

MOSES, the man of God, having acquainted the people with the tenor of God's commandments, both concerning worship and civil conversation, doth enforce all by a pregnant exhortation, laying before their eyes the blessings of obedience, and the plagues and curses that should overtake them in case they should decline from the ways of the Lord thus recommended to them; in all which he showeth himself not only as an ordinary preacher speaking by way of exhortation and doctrinal threatening, but as a special prophet speaking by way of prediction, and that with such clearness and certainty that these few chapters may be looked upon as an exact calendar and prognostication, wherein the good or bad days of this people are expressly calculated and foretold; yea, comparing events with the prediction, you would rather conceive Moses his speech to be an authentic register and chronicle of what is past than an infallible prophecy of what was to come: nothing good or bad hath befallen this people from the beginning to this day but what is here foretold. What is more largely declared upon in this exhortation is contracted into a narrow room and summary here in the text: 'See, I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil.'

In the words observe:—

1. The matter propounded, in two pairs, that have a mutual connection one with another: *life and good, death and evil.*

2. The manner of proposal: *I have set before thee.*

3. A duty inferred or attention excited: *see.*

1. The matter propounded, a double pair or conjugation: 'Life and good, death and evil.' Life as the end, good as the means leading to life; or else, life, that is, the enjoyment of God; and good, the felicity following it. The Septuagint changeth the order, *τὴν ζῶην καὶ τὸν θάνατον, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ κακὸν.*

2. The manner of proposing: 'I have set before thee.' Septuagint, *δώδεκα πρὸ προσώπου σου σήμερον*; that is, in a lively manner laid forth and offered for choice. We have a saying, *ἀντικείμενα παράλληλα μάλιστα φαίνεται*, that contraries put together do mutually illustrate each other. Here is good and evil, life and death, put together, that we may embrace the one and eschew the other. As the poets feign of Hercules when he was young, virtue and vice came to woo and make court to him; virtue, like a sober chaste virgin, offering him labours with praise and renown; vice, like a painted harlot, wooing him with the blandishments of pleasure. So, in the 9th of Proverbs, wisdom and folly are represented both pleading to draw in the hearts of men to them: ver. 4, compared with the 16th, 'Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith, Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine that I have mingled;' the one hath her pleasures and the other hath her pleasures, only the pleasures of folly are 'stolen waters' and 'bread eaten in secret,' comforts we get by stealth, jollity, and mirth, when conscience is asleep. So here Moses layeth before them the fruit of obedience and disobedience—life and death.

3. The word exciting attention: *ἴδου*, 'See;' I have done this in order to choice; for so it is ver. 19, 'Choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.'

Doct. It is the duty of the faithful servants of the Lord in a lively manner to set before the people life and death as the fruit of good and evil.

Moses was God's minister to instruct this people, and what doth he propose and confirm in his doctrine, but life and death, good and evil? and this was a part of his faithfulness. Witness that vehement obtestation used ver. 19. He calls heaven and earth to record that he had faithfully discharged his duty herein. This was the course that God himself took with Adam in innocency. He set before him life and death, a blessing and a curse, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, Gen. ii. 9, that he might live by the one and not perish by the other. God had respect to the mutability of his nature, and therefore restrained him by the threatening of death as a curse not to eat of the one, as he enjoined him to eat of the other as a pledge of life and blessing. This same course did Christ take in his sermons, by telling them of the wide gate and the strait gate, the broad and narrow way, much company and little, the one tending to destruction, the other to life, Mat. vii. 13, 14. So wisdom speaks by Solomon, Prov. viii. 35, 36, 'Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord; but he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.' So that you see this is an excellent way to gain men to the holy life.

I. Let us consider our work.

II. The reasons why we must do so.

I. Our work, the matter of it, and the manner in which we are to propound it to you.

1. The matter : we must set before the people :—

[1.] Life and good.

[2.] Death and evil.

This I shall open in these propositions :—

First, That there is a distinction between good and evil, vice and virtue. He that doth not acknowledge it is unworthy the name, not only of a Christian, but of a man. Certainly he is unworthy the name of a Christian, for the whole word of God doth mete out the bounds between both these, and show what is forbidden and what is commanded ; and therefore it is a defiance of Christianity to doubt of it. But he is also unworthy the name of a man. Nature apprehendeth that some things are worthy of praise, and others worthy of blame and reproof ; else why should wicked men be offended to be taken for such as they are, and desire as much as possibly they can to seem better, and to cover their dishonest actions with a plausible appearance ?

Secondly, The matching these two, death and evil, life and good. And here I shall speak—(1.) Of the suitability of the connection between them ; (2.) The greatness of both ; (3.) The certainty of both these, life and death, as the fruit of good and evil.

1. The suitability or correspondency there is between holiness and beatitude, sin and misery. It must needs be so, if we consider the wisdom, justice, holiness of God.

[1.] The wisdom of God, which doth all things according to weight, measure, and number, cannot permit the disjunction of these two things, so closely united together as sin and punishment, grace and happiness, but there will be an appearance of deformity and irregularity. For if there be such a thing as good and evil, as *bonum* and *malum morale*, as reason will tell us there is ; and again, if there be such a thing as pleasure and pain, as joy and sorrow, or that which we call *bonum* and *malum naturale*, as sense will tell us there is ; then it is very agreeable to the wisdom of God that these things should be rightly placed and sorted ; that moral evil, which is sin, should be punished with natural evil, which is pain and misery ; that the inordinate love of pleasure, which is the root of sin, should be checked by a forethought of pain ; and that moral good, which is virtue and grace, should end in joy and pleasure. For God is naturally inclined, as the creator of mankind, to make his creatures good and happy, if nothing hinder him from it. Well, then, we see how incongruous it is to the wisdom of God, who permits no dissonancy or disproportion in any of his administrations, to admit a separation of these natural relatives. If there were no other testimony of this, yet the dispositions of our own hearts would know it ; for they are some obscure shadows of the properties which are in God. We have compassion on a miserable man, whom we esteem not deserving his misery ; we are also moved with indignation and displeasure against one that is fortunate and successful, but unworthy the happiness that he enjoys. Which is an

apparent testimony and proof that we are sensible of an excellent harmony and natural order between these two things, virtue and felicity, sin and misery; and to see them so suited doth exceedingly please us.

[2.] The justice of God, as he is judge of the world, and so must and will do right, doth require *ut bonis bene sit, et malis male*—that it should be well with them that do well, and ill with them that do evil. God is naturally inclined to provide for the happiness of man, as he is his creator; and if there were no sin to stop the course of God's bounty, there would be nothing but happiness in the world. But since the entrance of sin into the world, men are of different sorts; some recover out of their estate of sin, and live holy; others wallow in their filthiness still. Now it is agreeable to God's general justice, as he is the judge of the world, to execute vengeance on the one and reward the other; that happiness should accompany virtue by a natural and inseparable dependence, and misery incessantly attend vice, Rom. ii. 6-8. It is true, the bond which joineth happiness and virtue together is not so strong, and so every way naturally evident, as that which joineth vice and punishment. If a person in sovereignty and honour does not will that moral evils be punished, it is in some sort to consent to them; but the condition of the creature is such that he ought to be holy and virtuous, though God had not positively commanded him; and God having so commanded, we are bound to obey his command, though he had not proposed the hope of a reward, inasmuch as we owe all to God, both because of the infinite eminence of his majesty, as because we hold our beings and all from him. And therefore there is a distinction: Rom. vi. 23, 'The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' The one is wages, the other a gift. The promise which God maketh of remuneration, and the actual retribution which he performeth of the same, ought to be imputed only to his goodness and gratuitous liberality. Men cannot pretend any other right before him, from whom we hold all things, yea, our very being. Now, that which proceedeth of goodness seemeth not to be of so strait an obligation, but that he is at liberty to do, or not to do, especially when the transaction is between two persons, the dignity and authority of one of which is infinitely above the condition of the other, as the majesty of God is above his creature. Therefore as to such a reward God is free, and therefore might have enjoined holiness without the promise of such a recompense. But the general relation that is between punishment and sin, holiness and happiness, as to the consequence of one upon another, is agreeable to the general justice of God, which is a perfection necessary to him, as he is the supreme governor and ruler of the world.

[3.] The holiness and purity of God, which inclineth him to hate evil and love that which is good. God, excelling in holiness himself, loveth the virtue and holiness of his creature, Prov. xi. 20; for how can he be imagined but to love his own image? And as goodness and holiness are loved by him, so he 'hateth the workers of iniquity,' Ps. v. 5, and abhorreth those that despise that which is most glorious in himself, his holiness. And then, if God loveth the good

and hateth the evil, he will express this in answerable effects, good with life, and evil with death.

In short, the difference between good and evil is not more naturally known, than it is naturally known that the one is to be punished, the other rewarded: whether we consider the wisdom of God, which sorteth and joins all things according to their natural order,—and therefore sin, which is a moral evil, is joined with sufferings, a natural evil, that is, a feeling of something painful to nature, and afflictive to it; or the justice of God, which dealeth differently with men that differ in themselves; or the holiness of God, who therefore will express his love to the good in making them happy, and his detestation of the wicked in the misery of their punishment.

2. The greatness of both these,—life and death; they are both eternal. Punishment in one scale holdeth conformity with the reward in the other. The full reward is an 'eternal and far more exceeding weight of glory,' called everlasting life; so is the full punishment, the eternal abode of body and soul under torments, expressed by everlasting fire. If we did only deal with you upon slight and cheap motives, you might refuse to hearken; but when we tell you of life and death eternal, you ought most seriously to consider:—Whatever can be hoped or feared from man is comparatively of little moment, because his power of doing good or evil is limited; but on the one side, 'It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' Heb. x. 31; on the other side, Rom. v. 2, 'We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.' God will act like himself, infinitely gloriously, especially when he is 'all in all,' when he doth not act by the mediation of the creatures, but immediately punishing the wicked and rewarding the good. The vessel can convey no more than it receiveth. When the creature is an instrument of vengeance, God acteth according to the proportion and rate of that creature; as if a giant should strike one with a straw. If God doth us good by an ordinance, the water runneth but as the pipe will contain; he cannot manifest himself in that latitude, but then God is all himself immediately. Consider:—

[1.] The greatness of the death that accompanieth evil. The afflictions and sorrows of this life are a part of this death. When Moses here had insisted on many temporal plagues which should befall his people, he saith, 'I have set life and death before you.' There are many miseries in this life which are the fruit of sin, which would make your hearts ache and your ears tingle to hear of. And then death, which consists in the separation of the soul from the body, is the king of terrors. But we speak of the second death, which is far more terrible, which consists in an eternal separation from the blessed and glorious presence of the Lord; no death like this. In all creatures that have sense, death is accompanied with pain; but this is a perpetual living to deadly pain and torment, from whence there can be no release. In the first death, the pain may lie in one place, but in the second it extends all over. The first death, the more it prevaileth the more we are past feeling; but in this death the sufferer has a greater vivacity than ever, the capacity of every sense is enlarged, and made more receptive of pain. While we are in the body, *vehemens*

sensibile corrumpit sensum—the more vehemently and violently anything strikes upon the senses, the more doth it dead the sense; as the inhabitants about the fall of Nilus are deaf with the continual noise. Too much light puts out the eyes; taste is dulled by custom. But here the capacity is improved by feeling. The power of God sustains the sinner, whilst his wrath torments him. As the saints are prepared for the blessedness of heaven, we cannot bear the least glimpse of that happiness which they enjoy above; so the wicked are fitted to endure those inconceivable pains. When the first death approaches, there is struggling for life, men would not die; but in the second death they desire a final destruction, they would not live.

[2.] The greatness and excellency of that life that ensueth good. All manner of blessings in this life is the lowest step of it. At death, when the spirit returneth to God that gave it, then it beginneth to be discovered, but it is consummated when body and soul shall be translated to heaven. This is life indeed. *Nescio an ista vita, mortalis vita, an vitalis mors, dicenda sit*—the present life is a kind of death, always *in fluxu*; like a stream, it runneth from us as fast as it cometh to us: Job xiv. 2, 'He fleeth away as a shadow, and continueth not.' We die as fast as we live, like the shadow of a star in a flowing stream. This life is annoyed with a thousand sorrows and calamities; but there is a freedom from all sin and misery, and a full fruition of pleasures for evermore, Ps. xvi. 11, and our capacities are strong to bear them. This life is patched up with supplies from the creatures, there is a full fruition of God himself, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And in this life such 'days may come wherein we have no pleasure,' Eccles. xii. 1. Life itself becomes a burthen; but that life, as it lasteth for ever, so we are never weary of it. The enjoyment of God is new and fresh to us every moment. As the angels for thousands of years are beholding the face of God, but never weary of so doing, so shall we always delight ourselves in seeing God as he is.

3. The certainty of both these, life and death, hell and heaven, as the fruits of good and evil.

[1.] Reason showeth it certainly that there is eternal life and death, or a state of torment and bliss after this life. All men are persuaded that there is a God, and very few have doubted but that he is a rewarder of virtue and a punisher of vice. Now, neither the one nor the other is fully accomplished in this world, even in the judgment of those that have no great knowledge of the nature of sin, nor what punishment is competent thereto. Therefore there must be after the sojourning in the body a time in which retributive justice shall be executed, and punishments and rewards that here are dispensed so disproportionably, even to what natural reason would expect from the hand of God, shall most equally be dispensed to persons. If any say virtue is a reward to itself, as in some sense it is, yet the full reward lieth in another world, and the main encouragements must be fetched from thence. There is an opposite principle against it in the heart, which must always be curbed and suppressed, and it meeteth with many temptations from the reproaches and oppositions of those who like not this sort of life. The sensual and ungodly will use all ways and means to brand the holy and heavenly as an humorous sort of men; and if

their hands be tied by the restraint of laws and government, so that we are not exposed to sufferings by their violence, yet we cannot but expect slanderous abuses from them. Now, the case being so, the motives must be sufficient to resist all the temptations of this life, to keep us in the love and obedience of God to the end, which the bare sense of our duty would hardly do in the midst of so many temptations. We are in a state of imperfection, and sense is very strong in us all, and the sufferings of the obedient are very great, that if we had not an eye to the recompense of the reward, we could not so well deny ourselves. Let every man consult his own soul, what would support him when all the world is against him, and he is hooted by the clamours of the wicked rabble, and pursued with sharp laws, and exposed to great difficulties and hardships; if he had no life to live but this, what would he do? Besides, it will not stand with the goodness of God, if you can suppose one that loves goodness for goodness' sake, and is so hardy as to contemn all his natural interests, that such a man should be a loser by his faithfulness and obedience to God, and be made altogether miserable by his duty without recompense, 1 Cor. xv. 19. And upon another account his goodness is engaged to take his servants into his own blessed presence; for the prevailing inclination of holiness, that is planted by his own hand in their breath, to love, serve, and see him, is an earnest that we shall not always be thus imperfect; for our reward consisteth, as of complete felicity, so exact holiness, seeing God, and being like unto him: 1 John iii. 2, 'We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' But suppose this were true, that virtue were a reward to itself, then what provision is there made for the punishment of vice? Cannot it be said, that they that addict themselves to that course of life are punished enough by doing so? Alas! wicked men profess great contentment in that course of life which they lead, and would be glad of the news that they should have no other punishment than to wallow in their lusts. Nature teacheth us, and the practice of all nations confirmeth it, that evils which consist in a breach of duty must be punished with afflictive evils painful to nature. Never such a lawgiver was heard of that would punish a man for robbery by causing him to commit adultery. And for virtue, though it hath a beauty to draw our love, yet it cannot itself be its own price and recompense, for man is of such a nature as he is still drawn on with the hope of some further good, till he come to the enjoyment of the chiefest good. And so many are the trials of the righteous in this world, that the apostle telleth us 'We were of all men most miserable, if our hopes were only in this life,' 1 Cor. xv. 19. The calamities of the good are as great a discouragement and offence as the prosperity of the wicked, therefore there is an estate of life and death to come. Besides, if man be God's subject, employed by him in a course of duty and service, when his work is ended then must he look to receive his wages, accordingly as he performed his duty or faulted in it. Now our work is not ended till this life be over; then God dealeth with us by way of recompense either in pains or joys. Add further, reason will tell us that these pains and joys after death should be everlasting, that the recompense should last as long as man lasts. For

man as to his soul is immortal, and there is no change of estate in the other world after our trial is over, and things of religion become mere matter of sense. Certainly one that hath lived holily, and is translated to glory, there is no reason that he should afterwards be made miserable; and the punishment holdeth conformity to the reward: Luke xvi. 26, 'Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.' There is no changing of estates or places in the other world, the blessedness and misery is eternal. Things to come would not considerably counterbalance things present, if there were not eternity in the case.

[2.] Conscience hath a sense of it, and on the one hand standeth in dread of eternal death, and on the other is cheered with the hopes of eternal life. The first is proved Rom. i. 32, Heb. ii. 14, and 1 Cor. xv. 56. Men are afraid of death, not only as a natural evil, as it puts an end to present comforts, but as it is an entrance to an unknown country. What is the reason of the stings of conscience, which are never so sensible and quick as when men approach near death, or behold themselves in some near danger? What are these but pre-saging fears that anticipate miseries after this life? If the soul were extinguished with the body, then troubles should in reason vanish; but we find that this is the time when these alarms are redoubled, and these tempests increase with violence. On the other side, there are joys of the Spirit which are a taste and earnest of eternal life: Eph. i. 13, 'He hath given us the earnest of the inheritance.' Good men have so much of heaven upon earth as may assure them they may look for more; this hath supported them in all their difficulties and labour. Now if there was no such thing, the wise and best men that ever the world saw would be liars or fools; liars in pretending comfort which they had not, or fools in being deceived by their own vain imagination, and in taking such pains in subduing the flesh, hazarding their interests, and performing their duty upon the hopes of another world.

[3.] Scripture, if we will take God's word for it, is express, Rom. viii. 13, Rom. vi. 21, 22, and Gal. vi. 8. The present world is comprised in two ranks—either sowing with the flesh, that is, such who employ their labour to make provision to gratify the carnal appetite, or sowing to the Spirit, such as employ their time and study in advancing the work of the Spirit; and they issue themselves into two states in the other world—the state of everlasting perdition or everlasting life. Thus do the scriptures propound good and life, evil and death.

Secondly, The manner how this is to be done. It must be set forth with all evidence and conviction as to the reason of men, with all earnestness and affectionate importunity to awaken their affections. In short:—

1. So as will become the belief of these things. We must not speak of them as a thing spoken in jest and by rote, but as firmly persuaded of the truth of things as if heaven and hell were before our eyes, and as evident to sense, Heb. xi. 1. We look upon these things naturally as at a distance, and so have but a cold apprehension of them; but we should by faith see them as near at hand; as you would pull a man out of the fire, Jude 23, or as falling into a deep pit or bottomless gulf; as one in

the greatest earnest. Belief puts a life into truths which otherwise are but dead and weak in their operation: 'I believed, and therefore did I speak;' as if we had a deep sense of these things upon our own hearts.

2. As will become experience: 2 Cor. v. 11, 'Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.' A man that knoweth the terrors of the Lord, that hath been scorched himself, will set them before men as if they were at hand, ready to surprise them. Others that talk of these things but as cold opinions, they will not be so careful to rouse up men to mind the case of their souls: 'If one went unto them from the dead, then will they repent,' Luke xvi. 30.

3. So as will become zeal for the glory of God, which is much promoted by the subjection and obedience of his creatures, and his interest in them; therefore we should be diligent and industrious in drawing souls to Christ: Col. i. 27, 28, 'Christ in you, the hope of glory; whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.' 2 Cor. xi. 13, They have blind, unbelieving hearts, therefore need to be taught; cold careless affections, and need to be warned;¹ and this with the greatest wisdom that can be used, that all may be presented to Christ at the last day. This is that which sets all agoing. When we are wooing for Christ we should not do it coldly and triflingly, but as those that would prevail for their master, that he may be glorified in their being gained to him.

4. So as will become compassioners of precious and immortal souls, for whom Christ died, souls that must live for ever in heaven or hell. Oh, mind them of their duty, warn them of their danger; they are ready to tumble into the flames of hell every moment, therefore with all earnestness set life and death before them. We should use the more compassion to souls, because God himself, who hath employed us, hath expressed so much of his compassion. He doth not only tell them they will die, but expostulateth with them, 'Why will you die, O house of Israel?' Ezek. xxxiii. 11; and Ezek. xviii. 23, 'Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, and not return from his ways and live?' The greatest quarrel Christ hath with sinners is because they will not come to him for life: John v. 40, 'Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.'

Two reasons make this more evident:—

1. This is God's will.

2. This is of great profit to the souls of men.

First, This is God's will, that his law should be propounded with the sanction of it; that is, with penalties and rewards. God might rule us with a rod of iron, require duty out of mere sovereignty; but he will 'draw us with the cords of a man,' Hosea. xi. 4, with such arguments as are fitted to man's temper, as he is a reasonable creature; that is, by promises and threatenings. We are best moved and induced to anything by those two affections of fear and hope; the one affection serveth for aversion and flight, the other for choice and pursuit. Therefore he that knoweth the wards of the lock accordingly suiteth the keys, and doth not only require an exact duty, but also promiseth good and threateneth evil. Sovereigns, in their public edicts, do not

¹ Qu. 'warned'?—ED.

argue with their subjects, but only interpose their authority; but God condescendeth to reason with his creatures. He doth not say, as sometimes, 'Thus shall ye do, I am the Lord; but, If you do thus, this will be your ruin; and 'Obey these statutes for your good,' Deut. vi. 24; and so doth persuade as well as command.

Secondly, It is of great profit to the souls of men.

1. It is of profit that they should often be minded of the issues of things. Israel's want of wisdom cometh from this: Deut. xxxii. 29, 'Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end;' that is, how obedience and disobedience will succeed with them, Lam. i. 9. David's trouble at the prosperity of the wicked arose from want of this: Ps. lxxiii. 17, 'Then I understood their end.' Rom. vi. 21, 'The end of these things is death.' *Fugientes respice*, what will they leave in their farewell and departure?—Jer. xvii. 11, 'At his latter end he shall be a fool.' The first addresses of sin smile upon us, but 'the sting is in the tail.' So the beginning of godliness is bitter, but afterward it yieldeth everlasting peace and comfort.

2. That they may reflect on both combined: either of them single is of great force, but both joined together come in upon the heart with greater power. We need a bridle and a spur; a bridle because of our proneness to evil, and a spur because of our backwardness to good. We have both, we are compassed and hedged in with our duty on every side. If we look back, there is death to affright us; if forward, heaven to allure us. There is eternal life to draw us, there is eternal death to drive us. If God had only terrified us from sin by inexpressible pains and horrors, and made no promise of unspeakable joys, this were enough to engage us to live without blame and blemish, that we might not be cast into the prison of hell; or, if only to quicken our diligence, he had propounded hopes and happiness as the privilege of those that live virtuously and holily, and evil men did utterly perish when they die, this were enough to draw us. If God had only promised heaven and no hell, there would not be so strong a motive; but can we be cold and dead when both life and death are laid before us, and both for ever? This is very unreasonable. Solomon telleth us, Prov. xv. 24, 'That the way of life is above to the wise, to avoid hell beneath.' Every step they tread is a going from eternal death, and an approach to eternal life. Therefore, as we would escape the torments of hell, and possess the joys of heaven, we should be serious. We are undone for ever if we be not blessed for ever; and the nearer we draw to the one, the more we avoid the other; so that we have a double reason not to go back, and much to engage us to go forward.

APPLICATION.

Use of exhortation.

1. Suffer us to discharge our duty in this kind: Heb. xiii. 22, 'I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation.' It is but a small request we have to you, that you will but suffer us to take pains to save your souls. It is irksome to carnal men to have their sluggishness stirred up; but what is there that should make it grievous and distasteful? Many can endure us when we treat of the joys of heaven, but when we

come to flash hell terrors in the face of obstinate sinners, and tell them of damnation and wrath to come, they think us harsh and severe, and say, as Ahab of Micaiah, 'He prophesieth nothing but evil to me.' Ay! but we must set both before you both life and death; and it is better to hear of hell than to feel it. That is a cowardly confidence that cannot endure the mention of our danger. There are others that like the offer of heaven, but would sever those things that are so aptly joined,—life and good, death and evil; that cannot endure this doctrine in this sense. They say, with those carnal hearers, 'Evermore give us the bread of life,' John vi. 34. But they mistake the terms upon which it may be had. Oh! but we are not in the place of God, and cannot make the way to heaven easier than it is; but we propound God's covenant as we find it, life and good, the conditions as well as the offer. Would you have us compound with you, and deceive your souls with a false hope, which will leave you ashamed when you most need the comfort of it? Men would live with the carnal, die with the sincere; therefore suffer us to be earnest with you.

2. The next thing that we exhort you to is to believe the certainty, consider the weight and importance of these truths, that there is a difference between good and evil, that the fruit of the one is death, of the other life; and consider how irrational it is for a man to love death and refuse life. No man in his right wits can make a doubt which to choose: 'In vain is the snare laid in the sight of any bird,' Prov. i. 17. You cannot drive a dull ass into the fire that is kindled before his eyes. It is true you hate death, and yet it is proper to say you choose it: Prov. viii. 36, 'All they that hate me, love death.' Why, refusing the good, do you so eagerly pursue the evil? How can ye hate the wages, and yet love the work by which the wages is to be earned, and in requital of which it will be certainly paid? If you detest hell, why not sin? If you love heaven, why do you not do good? There is an inseparable connection between these. Who can pity the torment of that man that thrusts his hand into the fire? What should be the cause of this but incredulity and inconsideration?

[1.] Unbelief and atheism; they do not think God will recompense men according to their works. Now, till men believe it, tell them of hell or heaven never so much, it will not work upon them. Who would lose that which is certain and present, for the hope or fear of that which is to come and doubtful, when they suspect or believe it not fully? No wonder they go on still in the paths that lead down to the chambers of death, and are prejudiced against the ways of life. But why are men such infidels as to future things?

(1.) You cannot disprove what is declared in scripture, or by any sound argument evince that there is no heaven or hell; for all you say or know, there are both really existing; and if there were no more but that, it were good to take the surer side, especially when you part with nothing but a few base pleasures and carnal satisfactions. Reason should make us very careful. In a lottery, where there is but a possibility of gaining, men will venture a shilling or a small matter for a prize. If there be either no hell or heaven, you part with no more than the vain pleasures of a fading, perishing life; but if this doctrine prove true, you run the hazard of eternal torments, and lose the comfort of eter-

nal joys; therefore it is better to trust this doctrine than try it. It is prudence to make provision for the worst.

(2.) But doth not natural reason and conscience, and the presages of our hearts, shrewdly evidence that there is a world to come, as before was proved—a heaven for the good, and a hell for the wicked? At present the wicked flourish, and the good many times suffer; what shall we conclude thence? Mal. ii. 17, ‘Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in him; or where is the God of judgment?’

(3.) If nature be not so clear, scripture is full and positive. If we do indeed believe the scripture, as we profess to do, certainly we cannot so grossly go against the whole current and drift of it. That scripture which you profess to be the book of God, and take for the rule of your lives and expectations; that scripture which your consciences dread as owning the voice of God therein; that scripture which is confirmed by God’s providence and frequent experiments; that scripture which hath such a rational evidence in itself,—it is that assureth us of a world to come, and bringeth it to light in the word. The very thought of such a hell and heaven as were invented by the ancient heathens, was enough to make them virtuous; though as to the manner and circumstances of it, the more understanding knew it to be a very fable and supposition: yet the thing itself, being bottomed and founded upon those natural apprehensions of the immortality of the soul, and the attributes of the deity, had powerful effects upon them. Now shall we talk of Christianity, pretend a reverence for the scriptures, and shall we tremble no more at the certainty of a hell than Gentiles at the possibility of it? Shall their suspicion work more than our faith? If they were so pliable to poets’ discipline, how should we be moulded and framed by the doctrine of Christ? What awe and holy trembling should it breed in our hearts!

[2.] Inconsideration. We are so taken up with the cares and pleasures of the present life, that we are not at leisure to think of death and life, hell and heaven, or upon what terms we stand with God: Jer. viii. 6; Ecces. xi. 9, ‘Remember that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.’ The young man in the heat of his lusts forgetteth that a time of reckoning will come. Oh, think of your ways, and whither you are a-going. It is foolish to busy ourselves about many things, and neglect the main: Luke x. 41, 42. You think it will bring a damp on your hearts. But if you cannot endure to think of hell, how much less will you endure one day to suffer it? Is it such a trouble to consider it?—what is it to feel it? Timely consideration is the way to prevent and escape these torments; it will help to preserve you from coming thither, and cause it to work upon you. Oh, then, ‘Set your hearts unto all these words which I testify among you this day,’ Deut. xxxii. 46. Consideration will awaken the soul that was formerly laid asleep. Will heaven or hell entice or deter the man that thinketh not of it? Shall we not, therefore, have a little patience while we deeply ponder and weigh these things in our minds? See, life and death is set before you; and will you not allow a few serious thoughts about them, nor ask your souls what shall become of you to all eternity? God’s great complaint of

Israel is: Isa. i. 3, 'My people will not consider;' and the same complaint may be made of us. Things are evident and clear to faith, reason, and conscience; but we will not consider, and so wander out of the way.

3. The next thing we exhort you to do, is to make choice for your own souls. That is the use Moses makes of it: Deut. xxx. 19, 'Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.' Hearing, believing, considering, are all in order to choice; and without choice, and a determined, fixed, bent of heart, you will never walk evenly in heaven's ways. Determine not only that you must, but you will, walk in the way which God hath set forth for you. God's ways must be chosen: Ps. cxix. 30, 'I have chosen the way of truth;' and ver. 173, 'I have chosen thy precepts;' Josh. xxiv. 15, 'If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve.' Not as if it were indifferent, but to set an edge upon their appetite. There is much strength in the bond, when a man bindeth himself freely, and makes him the more inexcusable if he doth not observe it. All will choose life before death, but they are out in the means; they do not choose good before evil, the good of holiness before the evil of sin. Every man desireth some good. It is as natural for the reasonable creature to desire to be happy, as it is for the fire to burn; but we do not make a right choice of the means that may bring us to that happiness that we desire. They would be happy, but they choose means quite contrary to happiness. Oh, then, choose the ways of God; let life be your motive, and holiness your choice. This is the way to live for ever, to avoid hell beneath. As soon as we come to years of discretion, we should make our choice to go on in the ways of life. To this we are obliged by the most weighty reasons, urged by the enforcements of the word, and by the sad and numerous examples of young people, who make an ill choice in the beginning, and go on, and are hardened therein, and perish for ever.

SERMON XVIII.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.—
MAT. VII. 12.

It is a general complaint of the world that Christians are defective in the duties of the second table. Some hypocrites may be so, to mask over a dishonest life with a pretence of worship and godliness; but we are not to judge of the rest of the people of God by these, no more than we would judge of the glory of a street by the filthiness of the sink or canal, or of the sound grapes in the cluster by the rotten ones. For certainly all that have truly submitted to Christianity do find that religion doth influence their relations, and run out and issue itself in all the duties which they owe to man as well as unto God. And it was not a boast which Austin said to the heathens, 'Let all