

## SERMON V.

*For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.*—MARK IX. 49.

IN the context you have a caution which our Lord gives against scandals and offences given to others, either by defection from the truth, or by a sinful conversation. And—

1. He intimates the cause of these scandals, which is some beloved lust; and that is better mortified than satisfied. There is something precious, profitable, and pleasant in our opinion, estimation, and affection, that calls us from God, and the duties we owe to him, and apprehended by us as so necessary for us, that we can no more spare it than a right eye, a right hand, or a right foot.

2. Our Lord compares the loss of satisfaction in such lusts with the danger of perishing for ever; and shows that (all things considered) it were better to be deprived of this profit, pleasure, or honour, than to lose eternal life, and run the hazard of eternal death. Either that pleasure or lust must be denied, or we perish for ever. The right hand must be cut off, or else we shall be cast into hell-fire.

3. Our Lord shows the danger of perishing for ever, amplified by a notable description, 'Their worm never dies, and their fire shall never be quenched.' The scripture lisps to us in our own dialect, and speaks in such notions we can best understand, and therefore represents the state of the damned by what is terrible to sense. By the worm is meant the anguish of conscience, by fire the wrath of God. *Memoria præteritorum, sensus presentium, metus futurorum.* The torment of the wicked arises partly from their own consciences. There is a vexing remembrance of what is past, their folly in the neglect of grace; and there is a bitter sense of that doleful state into which they have now plunged themselves, and a fear of what is yet to come. Now, beside this remorse for their folly, there is also a 'fire that shall never be quenched,' or the sharp torments that are prepared for the wicked.

4. Here is a collation or comparison of opposites—the pains of hell, with the trouble of mortification. First or last we must endure troubles and difficulties. Now it is much more eligible to take pains in the mortifying of sin, than to bear eternal pains in the punishment of it. This is that which is expressed in the text, 'For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.' In the words—

1. Observe, a double salting, either *with fire* or *with salt*; the one referring to one sort of people, and the other to the other. They agree in the common nature: for salt is of a fiery nature, and apt to consume; but they differ in the matter to be consumed. Salt consumes the superfluous moisture, which is apt to cause putrefaction; but the fire consumes the substance itself; so that to be salted with fire is to be given up to everlasting destruction. Fire consumeth all things; and God is called 'a consuming fire' to the wicked, Heb. xii. 29.

2. Here is also an allusion to sacrifices; for every man that lives in the world must be a sacrifice to God. The wicked are a sacrifice to God's justice; but the godly are a sacrifice dedicated and offered to him, that they may be capable of his mercy. The first are a sacrifice against their wills, but the godly are a free-will offering, a sacrifice not taken but offered. Now, the law of all sacrifices was, that they were to be salted with salt: Lev. ii. 13, 'And every oblation of thy meat-offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat-offering; with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.' Three times it is repeated there, to show that every sacrifice must be salted. That the wicked, the objects of God's vindictive justice, are accounted sacrifices, is evident by scripture. When the destruction of Moab is spoken of: Isa. xxxiv. 6, 'The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, and with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.' So Jer. xli. 10, God threatens there that the sword shall devour, and be made drunk with their blood, 'For the Lord God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country, by the river Euphrates.' What is in these places called a slaughter is also called a sacrifice. So when God intended a great carnage of his enemies, he calls upon the fowls of heaven, Ezek. xxxix. 17, 'Assemble yourselves, and come to my sacrifice;' with an allusion to the beasts offered in sacrifice. This may be gathered from the signification of the sacrifices, the burnt-offerings especially, which signified the guilt of the sinner; the death of Christ, which is the propitiation for sin; and the obedience of the sacrificer, as devoted to God. Now the first signification took place, and had its effect upon them, if they neglected the other two meanings of the sacrifices; and therefore they were to be looked on as salted with fire; whereas the other, who were accepted, were salted with salt.

3. The third observation for the opening of this is the two references of these saltings, or the distinct and proper application of them.

[1.] To the wicked: 'For every one shall be salted with fire;' that is, every one of them spoken of before, who indulged their corrupt affections, who did not entirely and heartily keep the covenant of God, and renounce their beloved lusts.

[2.] Here is the application to the godly: 'Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt;' that is, every one that is not a sacrifice by constraint, but voluntarily surrenders and gives up himself to God, to be ordered and disposed of according to his will, he is salted, not with fire, but with salt, which every one that is devoted to God is bound to have within himself. So while some are destined to the wrath of God, and salted with fire to be consumed and destroyed, others are salted with salt, preserved and kept savoury in the profession and practice of godliness. The doctrine is this:—

*Doct.* The grace of mortification is very necessary for all those who are devoted to God.

I shall prove three things:—

I. That the true notion of a Christian is, that he is a sacrifice, or a thank-offering to God.

II. That the grace of mortification is the true salt, whereby this offering and sacrifice should be seasoned.

III. I shall show you the necessity of this salt, that we may keep right with God in the duties of the covenant.

I. The true notion of a Christian is, that he is a sacrifice to God. This is evident by Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service;' that is, the reasonable part, which was figured by the sacrifices and oblations of the law: and so Isa. lxvi. 20, 'They shall bring your brethren for an offering unto the Lord.' Under the law, beasts were offered to God, but in the gospel men are offered to him; not as beasts were to be destroyed, slain, and burnt in the fire, but to be preserved for God's use and service. In offering anything to God, two things were of consideration; there was a separation from a common, and a dedication to a holy use, and they both take place in the present matter.

1. There is a separation of ourselves from a common use. The beast was separated from the flock or herd for this special purpose, to be given to God. Thus we are separated and set apart from the rest of the world, that we may be a people to God. We are 'no more our own,' 1 Cor. vi. 19; and we are 'no more to live to ourselves, but to him that died for us,' 2 Cor. v. 15. We are not to live to the world, to the flesh, or to such things as the natural heart craves; we have no right in ourselves to dispose of ourselves, of our time, of our interest, of our strength, but must wholly give up ourselves to God, to be disposed, ordered, governed by him at his own will and pleasure.

2. There is a dedication of ourselves to God, to serve, please, honour, and glorify him.

[1.] The manner of dedicating ourselves to God is to be considered. It is usually done with grief, shame, and indignation at ourselves, that God hath been so long kept out of his right, with a full purpose to restore it to him with advantage: 1 Pet. iv. 3, 'The time past may suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh, and of man;' it is high time to give up ourselves to the will of God; we have been long enough, too long, dishonouring God, destroying our souls, pleasing the flesh, living according to the flesh and the course of the world; therefore they desire to make restitution: Rom. vi. 19, 'For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.' Their forepast neglects of God and duty to him fill their hearts with shame, therefore they resolve to double their diligence, and to be as eminent in holiness as before they were in vanity and sin.

[2.] It is with a deep sense of the Lord's love in Christ; for we give up ourselves to God, not as a sin-offering, but as a thank-offering: Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you by the mercies of the Lord;' and 2 Cor. v. 14, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.' They are ravished with an admiration of God's goodness in Christ, and so give up themselves to him.

[3.] They do entirely give up themselves to God, not to be his in a few things, but in all, to serve him with all their faculties: 'You are not your own, but are bought with a price; therefore glorify God both with your bodies and souls, which are God's,' 1 Cor. vi. 20; and to serve him in all conditions: Rom. xiv. 8, 'Whether we live, we live unto God, or whether we die, we die unto God; for living or dying we are the Lord's.' They are willing to be used for his glory, not only as active instruments; but as passive objects, they give up themselves to obey his governing will, and to submit to his disposing will, to be what he would have them to be, as well as to do what he would have them to do: Phil. i. 20, 'According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.' Thus with all their faculties, in every condition of life, are they to be devoted to God in all actions. It is said, Zech. xiv. 20, 21, that 'holiness to the Lord shall be written,' not only 'upon the bowels of the altar and the pots of the Lord's house,' but also 'upon all the pots of Jerusalem;' not only upon the vessels of the temple, but upon common utensils; that is, translate it into a gospel phrase, that not only in our sacred, but even in our common and civil actions, &c., we should live as a people that are offered up to God.

[4.] The end why we give up ourselves to God is to serve, please, and glorify him: Acts xxvii. 23, 'His I am, and him I serve;' to please him by the obedience of his will: Rom. xii. 1, 2, 'Ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God;' Col. i. 10, 'That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.' And also to glorify him is their end and use. Phil. i. 21, 1 Cor. x. 31. This is the dedication by which a Christian becomes a spiritual and a holy sacrifice unto God. Now we must be sincere and real in this, partly—

(1.) Because the truth of our dedication will be known by our use: many give up themselves to God, but in the use of themselves there is no such matter; they carry it as though their tongues were their own, and had no Lord over them, Ps. xii. 4. They speak what they please; they use their hearts as their own, to think and covet what they please; their hands as their own, to do what they please; their bodies as their own, to prostitute them to all excess and filthiness; and their wealth and strength and time as their own, either to spare it, or lavish it according as their lusts guide and incline them. No, no; a sincere Christian makes conscience of his dedication to God, the reality and sincerity of it is seen in the use of themselves, and if he be tempted to do anything contrary to this vow and dedication, his heart riseth against the temptation: 1 Cor. vi. 15, 'Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid.' In point of fidelity to God, as we are in covenant with him, we must be careful that we employ and use what is God's for the glory of God; we must make conscience of alienating that that is sacred,

that that is the Lord's: your thoughts, your affections, your time, your strength, do all belong to him.

(2.) Because God will one day call us to an account: Luke xix. 23. 'He will demand his own with usury.' We shall be called to a reckoning, what we have done for God, what part and portion he hath had in our time, our strength, our parts, our interest; therefore every prudent and wise Christian should himself keep a faithful and constant reckoning how he lays out himself for God, for he must have a share in all things that we have or do.

(3.) We must be very sincere in this, because we are under the eye and inspection of God, who considers whose business we do, his or our own: Luke i. 75, 'That we should serve him in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.' We are ever before him, and though he doth not presently call us to an account, yet many times now he punisheth us for our neglect and mindlessness of his interest: Ezek. xvi. 8, 'Ye entered into a covenant with me, and became mine.' That was the reason of his judgments against them. When those that are his do not carry themselves as his, when that that is sacred is profaned by a common use, then a judgment is coming upon a nation, if dedicated to God, and it warps from him, or upon a person, if his ways be not upright with him.

II. The next thing I am to do is to prove that the grace of mortification is the true salt wherewith this offering and sacrifice should be seasoned. There is some dispute what is meant by the salt which Christ recommends to his disciples, and what was figured by the salt in the sacrifice, whether wisdom or zeal. In general, it is the grace of the Holy Spirit, by which sin is subdued and prevented; and the meaning suits exactly with the emblem and representation: for—

1. Salt preserves flesh from putrefaction by consuming that superfluous and excrementitious moisture, which otherwise would soon corrupt; and so the salt of the covenant doth prevent and subdue those lusts which would cause us to deal unfaithfully with God. Alas! meat is not so apt to be tainted as we are to be corrupted and weakened in our resolutions to God, without the mortifying grace of the Spirit. 'That which is lame is soon turned out of the way, unless it be healed.' Heb. xii. 13. And nothing is so unstable and mutable as an unmortified soul; therefore we can never behave ourselves as a sacrifice and an offering to God, unless we 'mortify our members which are upon earth, inordinate affections, covetousness, and the like,' Col. iii. 5. In short, the flesh is that which is apt to be corrupted, and therefore the grace that doth preserve us must be something that doth wean us from the interests of the flesh, and what is that but the mortifying grace of the Holy Spirit? The apostle saith, Eph. vi. 24, 'Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity,' or 'in incorruption.' There are many crooked lusts which are apt to corrupt us and withdraw our love to other things, but when these are mortified and subdued, that we may have a greater amplitude of affection towards God and Christ, then we are said to love him in sincerity and in incorruption.

2. Salt hath an acrimony, and doth macerate things and pierce into them; and so the grace of mortification is painful and troublesome to the carnal nature. How healthful and useful soever it be to the soul,

no question it is distasteful to curb our affections, and govern our hearts in the fear of God, and to row against the stream of flesh and blood ; but yet it is wholesome, it is a crucifying of the flesh, to handle it as Christ suffered on the cross, to give it vinegar and gall ; but yet this is necessary ; this is the thing which our Lord intends here in the context, that the sacrifice must be consumed or macerated ; we either must suffer the pains of hell or the pains of mortification ; we must be salted with fire or salted with salt. It is better to pass to heaven with difficulty and austerity, than to avoid these difficulties and run into sin, and so be in danger of eternal fire. The strictness of Christianity is nothing so grievous as the punishment of sin. The philosophers, when they speak of the nature of man, observe that in the concupiscible part, τὸ ἰσχυρὸν, something like moisture inclines to pleasure, in the irascible, τὸ ψυχρὸν, something like cold inclines to fear. This salt is to fetch out both, by checking our sensual inclination and also our worldly fears. We must crucify the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof ; they that are Christ's have done so, Gal. v. 24. We should rather displease ourselves and displease all the world than displease God, or be unfaithful in our duty to Christ. No profit, no pleasure, or secular concernment is so necessary, so comfortable, so useful to us as salvation.

3. Salt makes things savoury, so grace makes us savoury ; which may be interpreted with respect either to God or man.

[1.] Acceptable to God when seasoned with this salt, for God would accept of no sacrifice without it. Not that he tasted of their meat-offerings, or did eat the fat or flesh of bulls and goats, and drink their blood, and so would have it seasoned for his palate and appetite ; it is not so to be understood ; but in types as well as in similitudes there is a condescension to our sense and apprehension of things. That that is salted is savoury, therefore God would note his acceptation of our persons and services this way. By nature we are all odious, unsavoury, and distasteful to God by reason of sin: Ps. xiv. 3, 'They are all become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one:' in the Hebrew, it is putrified, stinking like corrupt and rotten flesh. We must be salted and seasoned by the grace of Christ, and so we become amiable and acceptable in the sight of God. The more upright we are, the more he delighteth in us.

[2.] To men: the more we are thus salted and mortified, the more shall we do good to others. Our Lord tells his disciples, Mat. v. 13, 'Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.' This is spoken to the disciples as disciples, not as apostles and public persons. It is a mistake to think that only ministers are the light of the world and the salt of the world. No ; all Christians must shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation ; all Christians must be as the salt of the earth. Christ's whole sermon contains general duties, and the disciples were not yet sent abroad as apostles, nor ever heard of such a commission, or that their master would send them abroad for the proselyting the world to the kingdom of God: that was done afterwards, chap. x., and therefore here he speaks to Christians as Christians. Now, they are said to be salt, even as they season all those among whom

they live. A Christian is never savoury in his conversation with others till he hath salt in himself; then all his actions are seasoned with grace, and beget a remembrance of God; then his words are seasoned with grace, and do good to others. The apostle saith, Eph. iv. 29, 'Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth;' that rotten and corrupt communication which vents itself in slandering, railing, ribaldry, foolish jesting at holy things, lies, cursing, and the like: all these come from a corrupt heart, as a stinking breath argues rotten lungs. These want the grace of mortification: so are all sapless spirits, that cannot speak anything of God seriously, but in their most serious discourse are as fresh as water. But go among the mortified, and you receive the savour of good things from them; you have not only savoury prayers and savoury sermons, but savoury conferences and discourses: Col. iv. 6, 'Let your speech be alway powdered with salt;' that is, do not speak idly, much less profanely, but in an edifying manner. Now, Christians ought to take heed they do not lose their savouriness, for then they do not please God nor profit man, and are fit for nothing but the dunghill. Thus I have proved the second thing, that the grace of mortification is the true salt that seasons Christians.

III. There is a necessity of this salt in all those that have entered into covenant with God, and have dedicated and devoted themselves to him.

1. By our covenant vow we are bound to the strictest duties, and that upon the highest penalties. The duty to which we are bound is very strict. We have answered God in all the demands of his covenant: 1 Peter iii. 21, 'For baptism saveth as the answer of a good conscience towards God.' The Lord demands and puts in effect this question, Will you die unto sin and live unto righteousness? This is the tenor of the baptismal covenant that is so often, so solemnly, renewed at the Lord's Supper; and you are to 'reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness, through Christ Jesus our Lord,' Rom. vi. 11; reckon yourselves, that is, in vow and obligation. And the penalty is very high if we sin wilfully, Heb. x. 26; so that our admission into Christ's family will be in vain, yea, to our further ruin if you do not stand to the covenant, if you keep sin still alive, and add fuel to the flames.

2. The abundance of sin that yet remains in us, and the marvellous activity of it in our souls. We cannot get rid of this cursed inmate till our tabernacle be dissolved, and this house of clay tumbled into the dust. Paul groaned sorely under it: 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Rom. vii. 24. And it is called 'sin that doth easily beset us,' Heb. xii. 1. Well, then, since sin is not nullified, it must be mortified. It works, it wars, there is a marvellous activity in it, it is very active and restless: Rom. vii. 8, 'Sin wrought in me all manner of concupiscence;' he means sinful nature. And the apostle James tells us, chap. iv. 5, 'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.' There is not a sleepy, but a stirring principle always inclining us to evil, and hindering that which is good. Sin doth not only make us a little flexible and yielding to temptations, but doth hurry us and impel us thereunto. It is 'a law warring in our members, that brings us into captivity to sin,' Rom.

vii. 23. Corrupt nature is not a tame thing, that works not till it be irritated by the suggestions of Satan or temptations of the world, but is like a living spring, that pours out water of its own accord; it will not let us alone. The heart of man is evil continually, and so it always hinders us from that that is good: Rom. vii. 21, 'When I would do good, evil is present with me.' It blunts the edge of our affections, it seeks to weaken our purposes by unbelieving thoughts, or drawing us away from God by the lure of some sensitive delight; in stealing our hearts from him in the very duties and solemn addresses we make to him; distracting our minds with thoughts of the world, and the pomp and glory thereof; and so turns our very duties into sin, and makes us lose the comfort and sweetness of them: it blasts and perverts our most sincere endeavours. Well, then, without this salt of the covenant, if this be so, what shall we do? Have we not need to keep humble and watchful? If sin be stirring, we must be stirring against it, and improve the grace of the Holy Spirit upon the account of Christ's death, and use all good means that it may be subdued in us.

3. Consider the sad consequences of letting sin alone, both either as to further sin or punishment.

[1.] As to further sin. For Christ speaks here of scandals. If lust be not mortified, it grows outrageous; it has foiled us before God, men, and angels, and exposed us to an open shame, or hardens us in a dead, careless course. Lusts let alone end in gross sins, and gross sins in final apostasy. Love of pleasure will end in drunkenness, or adultery, or the rage of unclean desires, or else in such a vain, light, frothy spirit, which is no way fit for religion. Envy will end in mischief and violence, if not in murder. Judas, by his covetousness, was brought to betray his master. Gehazi was first surprised with covetousness, then blasted with leprosy, and then became a shame and burthen to himself. The devil trieth by lust to bring us to sin, and by sin to shame, and by shame to horror and despair. But do the children of God run into such notable excesses and disorders? Yes; when they let sin alone, discontinue the exercise of mortification; when they do not remember the sacrifice must be salted with salt. Witness David, who ran into lust and blood. Witness Peter, who ran into denying Christ with oaths and execrations. Witness Solomon, who ran into sensuality and idolatry. And in all of us, old sins, long since laid asleep, may awake again and hurry us into spiritual mischiefs and inconveniences, if we make not use of this holy salt.

[2.] As to punishment. Sins prove mortal if they be not modified. Either sin must die or the sinner. There is an evil *in* sin, and there is an evil *after* sin. The evil *in* sin is the violation of God's righteous law; the evil *after* sin is the just punishment of it, eternal death and damnation. Now, those that are not sensible, or will not be sensible, of the evil that is *in* sin, they shall be made sensible of the evil that comes *after* sin. The un-mortified person spares the sin and destroys his own soul; the sin lives, but he dies. In the prophet's parable to the king of Israel, when he had let go the Syrian, saith he, 'Thy life shall go for his life;' so our lives shall go for the life of our sin. 'The end of these things is death,' Rom. vi. 21; and 'The wages of sin is death,' ver. 23.



But you will say, What is this to a justified person? 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ.'

Answer—You must take in all. Those 'who are in Christ, that walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit,' they have the salt of the covenant. But if you can suppose a justified person to live after the flesh, you may suppose also a justified person shall be condemned. Eternal death may be considered two ways—either as to the merit, or as to the event. As to the merit, as an evil which God hath appointed to be the fruit of sin; or as to the event, an evil that will certainly befall us. A justified person, one that is really so, may, must fear it in the first sense. There is such a connection between living in sin and eternal punishment, that he ought to represent the danger to his soul of living willingly and allowedly in his sins, that he may eschew it; for this is nothing but a holy making use of the threatenings, or considering the merit of sin. But as to the actual event, and perplexing trouble that ariseth from the apprehension of it; if his sincerity be clear and unquestionable, he must not fear it.

Now to make application.

I. For the reproof of those that cannot abide to hear of mortification. The unwillingness and impatience of this doctrine may arise from several causes.

1. From sottish atheism and unbelief. They despise all sober spiritual counsel, they make no conscience of yielding obedience to God. Solomon tells us, Prov. xix. 16, 'He that keepeth the commandments keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his way shall die.' There are the different issues of a strict obedience, and a slight vain conversation. And mark the opposition of the two tempers—*he that keeps the commandments*, and *he that despiseth his own ways*; that is, takes no heed to his life and actions, to order them according to the will of God; he cares not whether he please or displease, whether he honour or dishonour God, but leaves the boat to the stream, lives as his brutish lusts incline him, come of it what will come. He despiseth his own ways, and so runs into vanity, luxury, riot, fraud, injustice, and all manner of licentiousness. Now, no man thus despiseth his own ways but he despiseth other things which should be very sacred and of great regard and esteem with him. He despiseth God, and the word of God, and his own soul: Prov. xiv. 2, 'He that walketh in his uprightness, fears God; but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.' He that makes conscience of his duty hath a high esteem of God, he looks on his authority as supreme, his powers as infinite, his knowledge of all things exact, his truth in promises and threatenings as unquestionable, his holiness as immaculate, his justice as impartial, and his goodness exercised to us in sundry benefits as rich and every way glorious. Therefore he dare not but please God; he hath such a deep reverence for him, that he is always saying within himself, What will the holy and all-seeing God have done? Or, 'How can I do this wickedness and sin against God?' But now the careless and slight person that takes no care to govern his actions according to the will of God, hath contemptuous and slight thoughts of God, as if he were a senseless idol that took no notice of human affairs, that sees not, or would not punish the breaches of

his laws. They also despise the word of God: Prov. xiii. 13, 'He that despiseth the word shall be destroyed; but he that fears the commandment shall be rewarded.' There are some gracious hearts that stand in awe of the word, and though their minds be never so much set upon a thing, yet if a commandment stand in the way, it is more than if an angel with a drawn sword stood in the way to keep them back; they dare not break through God's hedge. But now a carnal, careless, and unbelieving wretch sets at nought all the precepts, promises, and threatenings of God, and can break with him for a trifle, for a little vain delight and profit. Nay, further, he despiseth his own soul: Prov. xv. 32, 'He that refuseth instruction, despiseth his his own soul.' He only cares for the body, but neglects his soul, scarce ever considers whether he has a soul to save or a soul to lose, as if he counted all fabulous which is spoken of God and immortality, of the day of judgment, or of heaven and hell. Now it is in vain to speak to these to renounce and mortify their pleasing lusts till their atheism and carelessness be cured. And their case is the more desperate because the disease doth not lie in their minds, but in their hearts, and comes not so much from opinion as inclination. A settled opinion must be vanquished by reason, but a brutish inclination must be weakened by almighty grace.

2. It may come from libertinism. And these harden their hearts in sinning by a mistaking the gospel.

[1.] Some vainly imagine as if God by Jesus Christ were made more reconcilable to sin, that it needs not so much to be stood upon, nor need we to be so exact, to keep such ado to mortify and subdue the inclinations that lead to it. They altogether run to the comforts of the gospel and neglect the duties thereof. Christ died for sinners, therefore we need not to be troubled about it. Some actually speak out these things as if all the mortification required were but to quell the sense of sin in the conscience, not to destroy the power of sin in their hearts, and if they can but believe strongly they are pardoned, all is well. If this were true, then in the hardest heart would be the best faith, for they have the least trouble about sin, and least conscience of sin. This is to cry up the merit of Christ, to exclude the work and discipline of this spirit,<sup>1</sup> yea to set the merit of his death against the end of it, and so to set Christ against Christ. He bore our sins: 'He bore our sins in his body upon the tree, that we might be dead to sin, and alive to righteousness,' to promote this mortification that we speak of.

[2.] Another sort think such discourses may be well spared among a company of believers, and they need not this watchfulness and holy care, especially against grievous sins; that they have such good command of themselves that they can keep within compass well enough. It is well if you be come to this height of Christian perfection, that temptations make none, or no considerable impression upon you. But we must warn you, and that of the most gross sins. Christ thought fit to warn his disciples: Luke xxi. 34, 'Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life.' And the apostle everywhere warns Christians of malice,

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'the Spirit'?—Ed.

of hypocrisy, of envy, of lying, of evil speaking: 1 Thes. iv. 6, 'Take heed that you do not overreach and defraud one another, for God is the avenger of all such.' But these men would be fed with refined strains of contemplative divinity, and have no sins reprov'd, but such kind of sins as would seem a credit rather than a disgrace; like those diseases that are incident only to the best complexions and constitutions. If you speak against something that may rather argue their excellency than shame them of their sin, you shall be welcome. This over-spiritual preaching ends in an airy religion. Is sin grown less dangerous, or men more skilful to avoid it than heretofore? Certainly, he that considers how many scandalous professors there are, that would be accounted the people of God, hath no cause to think so. If Paul saw need of mortification, 1 Cor. ix. 27, we are not more strong, but more foolhardy.

[3.] A third sort are such as think believers are not to be scared with threatenings, but only oiled with grace. But then consider, the words of Christ were to his disciples. And to whom did the apostle Paul write? To believers questionless: 'If you live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live,' Rom. viii. 13. No part of the Spirit's discipline must be omitted. If one end of Christ's coming was to verify God's threatenings, and that the curse of the law should not fall to the ground, surely there is use of threatenings still.

3. It may arise from another cause, that is, the passionateness of carnal affections. Men are so wedded to their lusts, they cannot leave them, and so strangely besotted, they are even ready to sit down and say they will venture their souls rather than live a strict life. Is the pleasing of the flesh so sweet to you? or hell so slight a matter? And will the day of judgment be so slubbered over? There is a raging despair, and there is a sottish despair. The raging despair of a Cain, Gen. iv. 13, 'My evil is greater than can be borne!'—when we are ready to sink under the burden of our sins; and a sottish despair, when we are not sound with God, and loth to improve the grace of the Redeemer, but say, There is no hope; we will go on in the imaginations of our own heart, Jer. ii. 25. There is no hope; it is an evil, and I must bear it. If I be damned, I cannot help it, I must bear it as well as I can. What! will you bear the loss of heaven, the wrath of the almighty and eternal God? Surely you know not what eternity means, what hell and heaven means. You will know, when the eyes that are now blinded by the delusions of the flesh shall be opened, when you shall see others 'sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and you shall be shut out.' Canst thou bear this? If Rachel could not endure the want of children, and Jacob the supposed loss of Joseph, when all his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him; if Ahitophel could not endure the loss of his credit in counsel, how wilt thou endure the loss of thy soul and the glory of the blessed to all eternity? When thou hast nothing to beguile thy mind, and thou art divested of all other comforts, and thou must feed upon this for ever. So for the pains of hell. Thou that canst not endure to be scorched a day or two in feverish flames, or the pain of the stone or gout, when God arms the humours of thine own body

against thee, and canst not endure the torment of an aching tooth, how canst thou endure the wrath of an eternal God? 'Can your hearts endure, or your hands be made strong in the day that I will deal with you?' saith the Lord.'

*Use 2.* Is to persuade you not to neglect the salt of the covenant. It may be fretting, but it is healthful; as the most salutary medicines are usually most troublesome. To help you to improve this kind of argument, which our Lord here useth—

1. Consider, there are but two sorts of men in the world, and you are one of them. There is no neutral, no middle state; there are but two principles that men are influenced by, the flesh and the spirit; and there are but two ends men propound to themselves, either the pleasing of the flesh upon earth, or the enjoyment of God in heaven; and two places they issue into, heaven or hell. The scripture is peremptory, and tells you who shall go to heaven, and who shall go to hell: Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;' Gal. vi. 8, 'He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.' Or consider that, Prov. xiv. 14, 'The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways, and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.' There are two different persons commencing and setting forth in the pursuit of happiness, the backslider in heart and the good man. The backslider in heart is one that continues in the apostasy and defection of mankind, that indulgeth his lusts and vain pleasures, and for a seeming good leaves God, who is the chief good. But the good men are those who make it their business to keep their hearts chaste and loyal to God. They both desire to be filled and to be satisfied. The one takes his own way, and the other God's counsel; and in the event both are filled. The backslider in heart hath enough of his own ways when they have brought him to hell; and the good man hath enough when he comes to the enjoyment of the blessed God. And there is one truth more there, they are both filled from themselves, their own ways. The backslider shall have the fruit of his own choice, and a good man is satisfied with that course of godliness that he hath chosen, Prov. i. 31. Those that turn away from God, it is said, 'They shall eat of their own ways, and be filled with the fruit of their own devices;' and Isa. iii. 10, 'Say unto the righteous, it shall be well with him, for he shall eat of the fruit of his own doings.'

2. Consider the doleful condition of those that indulge their carnal affections; and that either threatened by God, or executed upon the wicked.

[1.] Consider it as it is threatened by God. If God threaten so great a misery, it is for our profit, that we may take heed and escape it. There is mercy in the severest threatenings, that we may avoid the bait when we see the hook, that we may digest the strictness of a holy life, rather than venture upon such dreadful evils. Why did our Lord repeat it three times, 'Where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched'? but that we may have it often in our thoughts, that we may not buy the pleasures of sin at so dear a rate—so hard a price as the loss of our precious souls.

[2.] Consider the punishment as executed upon the wicked. How many are now burning in hell for those sins which you are ready to commit? The serious consideration of it will check the fervour of your lusts, that you may not easily venture upon an everlasting hell.

[3.] Consider which trouble is most intolerable—to be salted with salt, or to be salted with fire; with unpleasing mortification, or the pains of hell; the trouble of physic, or the danger of a mortal disease. Surely to preserve the life of the body, men will endure the bitterest pill, take the most loathsome potion. Why? their lives lie on it. And shall we be unwilling to such a necessary strictness, to these wholesome severities, which conduce to save you with an everlasting salvation? There is no remedy; trouble must be undergone. Surely a strict diet is better than a speedy death; and the pricking of a vein by a chirurgeon is not so bad as a stab at the heart by an enemy. Better be macerated by repentance, than broken in hell by torments. Which is worse, discipline or execution? Here the question is put: you must be troubled first or last. Would you have a sorrow mixed with love and hope, or else mixed with desperation? Would you have a drop or an ocean? Would you have your souls cured or tormented? Would you have trouble in the short moment of this life, or have it eternal in the world to come?

[4.] Be sure you be a sacrifice dedicated to God, really entered into covenant with God, and set apart for his use; that this may be your end, your business, your scope, to please, glorify, and enjoy him, 2 Cor. i. 9. We can the better speak to you when you are under a covenant engagement. Christ bound you to this when he died for you: he 'sanctified himself that you might be sanctified through the truth,' that is, dedicated to God, John xvii. 19; and 'by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,' that is, them that are consecrated to God, or entered into a holy covenant with God. Christ bound you to it, and your own gratitude will suggest it to you: 'I beseech you, by the mercies of the Lord, present yourselves,' &c. Nay, the new nature will incline you to it: Rom. vi. 13, 'Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.' The new life will presently discover itself by its tendency and end, if this be indeed your end and work to be faithful to God's covenant.

[5.] You will see a need of denying worldly and fleshly lusts; you will see nothing can be done in the spiritual life without mortification, that being dead to all things here below, you may be alive to God. That this must be your daily work, your necessity will sufficiently show. Are there no rebellious desires to be subdued? No corrupt inclinations to be broken? Do not you feel the bias of corruption drawing you off from God? David did, therefore he saith, 'Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.' Do not you find the sensitive lure prevail upon you, enticing your minds, and drawing you from the purity of your hopes, and strictness of conversation? 'Every man is drawn away, when he is enticed by his own lusts,' James i. 14.

[6.] Consider the sad condition of a believer that is under the corrective discipline of God, though he do not vacate his justified state. A sinning believer, that hath made bold with forbidden fruit, how doth

he smart for sin? What a wound in the conscience will wilful heinous sins make? Witness David, Ps. xxxii. and li. He gives an account how uneasy his heart did sit within him, he was afraid of God, who before was his joy and delight, and speaks as one ready to be cast out of his presence.

## SERMON VI.

*And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*—2 THES. III. 5.

THERE are two things keep religion alive in the soul—a love to God, and a hearty intent upon the coming of Christ. These are the two necessary graces which the apostle prays for in the text. Here is the love of God, that is the first grace, and the earnest or patient waiting for Christ. Love respects God, because he is the chief object of it, *primum amabile*, as being the first and chiefest good; but hope or patient expectation respects Christ, who, at his glorious coming, will give us our full reward. Love is the life and soul of our present duties, and by patient expectation we wait for our future hope. The love of God urgeth us to the duties of religion, and hope strengthens us against temptations, whether they arise from the allurements of sense or the troubles of the world. Love is our breastplate that guards the vitals of Christianity, and hope is our helmet that covers our head, that we may hold up our head in the midst of all the troubles and sorrows of the present life, 1 Thes. v. 8. Both graces are necessary, therefore it will not be unprofitable to insist upon them. I begin now with the former, ‘The Lord direct your hearts to the love of God,’ where note—

1. The grace prayed for: *the love of God*.
2. The efficiency which is necessary to produce it: *the Lord direct your hearts*. The word *direct* notes sometimes conduct and guidance, and sometimes bending or setting straight the thing that is crooked. Conduct and guidance, as we guide men that they may not go wrong; Ps. cxix. 5, ‘Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.’ Ships that are best rigged need a pilot, and they that love God most need to have their love ordered and directed to the best advantage of his glory and service. This for the first signification, guidance, and direction. But at other times it signifies the bending, inclining, or making straight what is crooked, and what bends and tends another way; in this sense I take it here. Our hearts are distorted and writhed, and averse from God and all good naturally; yea, and after grace received, are apt to wander, and return to their old bent and bias again; therefore, the apostle prays that God would form and set their hearts straight, that they may be more indeclinably fixed towards God; and this prayer he makes for the Thessalonians, whose ‘work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope’ he had so much commended before, and of whose sincerity he had such great confidence; for