

THE UNGODLY'S MISERY.

SERMON II.

And if it first begin at us, what shall the end of those be that obey not the gospel!—1 PET. IV. 17.

THESE words are propounded by way of admiration,* as if the apostle had been at his wits' end, and could not certainly set down how great the judgment should be, of those that obey not the gospel, it was so terrible and unavoidable. The points considerable are these:—

Three points considerable. 1. *That the seeming prosperity of the wicked shall have an end.*

2. *That it is wisdom to consider the end of graceless persons.*

3. *The description of them; in these words, they are such as obey not the gospel.*

Obs. 1. The seeming prosperity of the wicked shall have an end. It is naturally in the hearts of carnal persons, to think it shall be always well with them, whereas the prophet saith, the happiness of a wicked man is but 'as a candle, that ends in a snuff,' Prov. xxiv. 20, or like a rose, the beauty whereof suddenly fades, and nothing remains but the prickles. The favours of men, for which they so much offend God, shall have an end; their strength shall end, their pleasure shall end, (alas, they are but pleasures of sin for a season!) their life itself, the foundation of all their comforts, that shall have an end; but their sins, by which they have offended God, shall never have an end. See what a fearful judgment follows every wicked wretch; that which he sins for, his honour, riches, delights, all shall vanish and come to nothing; they shall not be able to afford him one drop or dram of comfort at his dying day; but the sin itself, the guilt of that, and the punishment due to the same, shall endure for ever, to torment his soul, without serious repentance and turning to God in time.

Obs. 2. The happiness of the wicked is momentary; their misery endless. But secondly, if the happiness of wicked men shall have an end, and their misery shall have no end, *let us not be dazzled with their present happiness, so as to imitate their evil ways; let us tremble at their courses, whose end we tremble at. If we walk in the same path, shall we not come to the*

That is, 'amazement.'—G.

same end? All wicked men that delight in the company one of another here, are brethren in evil, and shall be like a company of tares, all cast into hell-fire together hereafter. It is pity they should be severed then that will not be severed now. Those men's courses, therefore, which we follow here, of their judgment we shall participate eternally afterwards.

Use. Let this admonish us to have nothing to do with sinful persons, nor to be troubled with their seeming prosperity. 'They stand in slippery places,' Ps. lxxiii. 18. God lets them alone for a while, but their pleasure will end in bitterness at last; all their riches shall end in poverty and beggary. 'They shall not have a drop of water to cool their tongues,' Luke xvi. 24, 25. All their honour and greatness shall end in confusion and shame, and lie in the dust ere long. Indeed, we should rather pity them, if we consider their latter ends. Alas, what shall become of them ere long! The fall of these wretches shall be so terrible, that Peter could not set it down, but leaves it to the admiration of the reader, What shall the end of such be! &c.

One difference betwixt a wise man and a fool is, that a wise man considers his end, and frames his life suitable thereunto. Therefore if we would be truly wise, let us consider the end of those things in this world, which wicked men offend God for, and set so light by heaven and everlasting happiness for the procurement of. Alas, whatsoever is here, shall have an end! A Christian should frame his course answerable to eternity, that when his happiness shall end in this world, it may begin in the world to come, else we may outlive our happiness.

Present happiness aggravates future and eternal misery. This is the misery of wicked men, that their souls are eternal, but their happiness is determined in this life. Here that ends; but their misery is infinite, and hath no end at all. Look what degree of excellency any creature hath, if it be good; the same degree of misery it hath if it be evil. What made the angels worse than other creatures when they sinned, but only this? they were most excellent creatures, and therefore when they became evil, their excellency did but help them to subsist and be more capable of punishment. A wise man understandeth his misery. *Sapiens miser plus miser.* Now the angels when they fell became more miserable, because they were more capacious, and sensible of it, being spirits.

So man being sinful and evil, his end will be more miserable than any inferior creature, because he was more happy. His happiness helps him to more misery. How should this stir up every one to look about him, and not to prize himself by any outward excellency whatsoever! The more excellent thou art, the more miserable if thou sin against God. It is of all unhappiness the most unhappy thing, for a man to live happily here a while, and be eternally miserable afterwards; for our former happiness tends to nothing else but to make us more sensible of future miseries. What is all the felicity of great persons, when they die and leave this world? Alas, it soon comes to nothing, and serves but to make them apprehensive of more misery than meaner persons are capable of: what shall the end of such be? &c.

Obs.3. The endless miseries of the wicked should warn us from the love of their present pleasures and profits. From this, that the apostle leaves the punishment of all sinful wretches to admiration and wonderment, rather than to expression, for indeed it is above expression, we may learn—*when we are tempted to any sin or unlawful course, to consider thus with ourselves. Shall I, for a pleasure that will end, have a judgment that shall never end?*

for the favour of men that will fail, shall I lose the perpetual favour of God, whose wrath is a consuming fire, and burns to hell? shall I for a little profit, lose my soul eternally? Beloved, as the good things of a Christian, even in this life, are admirable beyond expression, 'peace that passeth all understanding,' Philip. iv. 7, and 'joy unspeakable and glorious,' 1 Pet. i. 8, &c., so when God awakens our consciences, those gripes and pangs and terrors of soul, which follow after sin committed, are unutterable and inconceivable. I beseech you therefore, whenever you are solicited to sin, for profit or pleasure, &c., set before your eyes the fading and perishing condition of these things, and the everlastingness of that judgment which attends upon them. Oh that we were wise this way!

Obs. 3. I come now to the third particular; *Those that obey not the gospel*, wherein we have—

1. A description of the *thing*.

2. And then of the *persons*.

The thing is the *gospel of God*; the persons are *wicked men*. God is the author of the gospel. It comes out of his breast, sealed with authority. Whence learn this, by the way, *that in refusing the blessed gospel, we have to deal with God himself*. It is God's word and gospel. Therefore when you reject it, you reject God; in receiving it, you receive God. You deal with God himself, when you deal with the ministers of his word. Therefore whenever you partake of the ordinances, say, with good Cornelius, 'We are now in the presence of God, to hear what he will say,' Acts x. 33.

Quest. But, what is it to obey the gospel?

Ans. To obey the gospel is to *entertain the offers of it*; for indeed though the gospel command us to believe in the Son of God, yet withal it offers the very command unto us; to believe in Christ, being in effect a command to receive him, which supposeth an act of giving and tendering something to us. Now when we do not receive and entertain with our whole heart Christ and his benefits, freely offered, we disobey the gospel, and so procure danger to ourselves.

But more particularly, he obeys the gospel *that is sensible of his own miserable and sinful condition, and from a sense thereof hungereth after the grace and favour offered in Jesus Christ to pardon sin*, which when he hath once obtained, [he] walks answerable to that great mercy received. He that receives whole Christ to justify him, and sanctify him too; that receives Christ as a king to rule him as well as a priest to save him, such a one receives the gospel. But those that are not sensible of their misery, or if they be, will not go to Christ, but, as desperate persons, fling away the potion that should cure them, these are far from obeying the gospel of God. Such likewise as pretend, Oh, Christ is welcome with the pardon of sin, but yet live in gross wickedness, against knowledge and conscience, and suffer him not to bear sway in their hearts, as if Christ came by blood alone, and not by water; whereas indeed he came as well by water to sanctify us, as by blood to die for us.

Many there are that think they obey the gospel, who are indeed very rebels and enemies unto it. They welcome the gospel, and they hate popery, &c., but notwithstanding they will be their own rulers, and live as they list; they will not deny themselves in their beloved sins; they are full of revenge, notwithstanding the gospel saith, 'This is my commandment, that you love one another,' John xv. 12. That 'bids them deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly,' Titus ii. 12; yet they will riot, and follow their base courses still. The gospel teacheth a man to acknowledge God in

all his ways, to deal with God in all things he goes about. Now, when a man lives without God in the world, saying, *God is merciful*, and *Christ is a Saviour*, and yet persists in those ways which seem good in his own eyes, never looking to God to guide him, or his law to rule him, how can such a one be said to obey the gospel?

That works have no place in the act of justification. But some others there are amongst us, that regard not Christ and his satisfaction alone, but join faith and works together in justification; they will have other priests, and other intercessors than Christ. Alas! beloved, how are these men fallen from Christ to another gospel, as if Christ were not an all-sufficient Saviour, and able to deliver to the uttermost! What is the gospel but salvation and redemption by Christ alone? Gal. ii. 16.

Therefore Rome's church is an apostate church, and may well be styled an adulteress and a whore, because she is fallen from her husband Christ Jesus.

And what may we think of those that would bring light and darkness, Christ and antichrist, the ark and Dagon together; that would reconcile us, as if it were no such great matter! Beloved, they that join works with Christ in matter of justification, err in the foundation. The very life and soul of religion consists in this. What was the reason the Jews stumbled at this stumblingblock, and were never benefited by Christ? Why? They set up a righteousness of their own, which could not stand, but soon failed them. So when a man sets up a righteousness of his own, neglecting the righteousness of Christ, it is impossible he should ever be saved, living and dying in that error, Philip. iii. 10.

Why disobedience against the gospel is so great a sin. Therefore, I beseech you, take heed of disobeying the gospel of Jesus Christ in any kind whatsoever, for of all sins this is the greatest, as shall appear by these reasons.

Reason 1. First, *because sins against the gospel are sins against those attributes, wherein God will glorify himself most*, as his grace, mercy, loving-kindness, &c. Therefore the gospel is called grace, because it publisheth, offers, and applies grace. Now sins against mercy are greater than sins against justice; for God hath made all things for the glory of his mercy. Even among men, are not sins against favours the greatest sins? To wrong a man whether he deserves well or ill is an offence. But what man will have his courtesies rejected, though never so mean? Love deserves love; favour deserves respect again. But now when we obey not the gospel, we neglect and despise the goodness and mercy of God. Oh what excellent blessings doth the gospel reveal, if we had hearts to value them! Doth not the gospel bring salvation! Is it not the word of *grace*, the word of *life*, the word of the *kingdom*? Beloved, I beseech you, lay these things to heart, for whensoever you refuse the gospel of Christ, you refuse with it the word of grace, of the kingdom of heaven, and eternal life, and all. Therefore the sins of the gospel must needs be the greatest sins.

Reason 2. Again, *sins against the greatest light are most sinful.* What makes sin out of measure sinful, but this, when it is committed against a great measure of light? What makes a man fall foul? It is not when he falls in a mist, or in a dark night, every one will pity him then; alas, he wanted light; but when he falls at noon-day. Beloved, had we lived in former times, when the light was not poured forth so abundantly as now it is, our sin had been the less; but now in this clear sunshine of the gospel, for us to live in sins condemned by so great a light, either in our judgment or practice, it must needs make our sin the greater. 'If I had not come

and spoken to them,' saith our Saviour, 'they had had some pretence for their sins,' John xv. 22; but when Christ had once poken, all excuse was taken away; they could not then say they knew not the will of God; and this is the reason of that speech of the apostle, 'Now you are in the light, walk as children of light,' Eph. v. 8. 'And this is the condemnation, that men hate light (not that men for want of light stumble, but), that men love darkness more than light,' John iii. 19. It is not the sin itself, but the love and liking of sin which aggravates men's wickedness, whenas the malice and poison of their hearts rebel against the discovery of God's good pleasure in Christ.

Negative infidelity is a lesser sin than disobedience to the gospel. No people out of the church are capable of this sin; for how can they sin by infidelity and unthankfulness for the gospel that never had it? And therefore negative infidelity is, as it were, no sin in comparison, 'If I had not come among them, they had had no sin,' saith Christ, John xv. 22. Negative I call that, whenas men believe not, having no means, as infidels and heathens, &c. And therefore as they sin without the gospel, so they shall be damned without the gospel. The rule of their damnation shall be the law of nature written in their hearts; for this is an undoubted truth, *no man ever lived answerable to his rule*; and therefore God hath just ground of damnation to any man, even from this, that he hath not lived answerable to the rule of his own conscience. So that we need not fly to reprobation, &c.

Reason 3. Again, another aggravation of sins against the gospel is, *that they sin against the better covenant.* The first covenant was, *Do this and live*, against which we all sinned, and *were under the curse*. But now we are under a more gracious covenant, *a covenant of mercy*, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and we shall be saved.' Therefore sin now must needs be more heinous; for if we sin against the gospel, either by presumption or despair, or else by profaneness, professing the gospel but denying the power of it, &c., 2 Tim. iii. 5, there is no remedy left for us. If a man sin against the law, against moral honesty and civil righteousness, there is a remedy in the gospel for him; but when a man sins against the sweet love and goodness of God, in rejecting the gospel of his dear Son, mercy itself shall not save such an one. That must needs be a strange sin that makes a man worse than a Sodomite, yet we read it 'shall be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah in that day,' Mat. x. 15, than for those that hear the gospel, the blessed allurements and invitations to believe, and to lead an holy life answerable to our faith and calling, and yet live in sins against conscience, despising the precious blood of Christ.

Herod was a wretched man, yet notwithstanding it was said, he added this to all, 'he put John in prison, a preacher of the gospel,' Luke ii. 20. Sins against the gospel in a loose malignant professor, are many times worse than all the rest. Oh therefore take heed of sinning against the favour and goodness of God; for this will confound us at the day of judgment, when we shall think, What! was so great mercy offered me, and did I slight it in this manner? Have I lost the favour of God, eternal life, and the glorious company of the saints in heaven, for a base pleasure of sin for a season? to gratify a brutish lust? Have I lost Christ and all the good by him for ever, only to satisfy my sinful disposition? to please a carnal friend? &c. Oh, how will this lie heavy upon the soul another day! We shall not need accusers. Our own hearts shall justify the sentence of God against us, be it never so sharp, that we have refused mercy, so often tendered to us in the blood of Christ. Mark what St Paul saith, 'The Lord Jesus shall be

revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon those that know not God, and obey not his glorious gospel,' 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. He saith not only on those that are swearers and profane persons, but ignorant sots that care not to know God, though they be not open sinners. He saith not, those that persecute the gospel or oppose it, shall be punished with eternal destruction from the presence of God, which is true; but those that sin in a less degree, 'such as obey not the gospel, 2 Thess. i. 8; that value not this inestimable jewel; that sell not all to buy this pearl, Mat. xiii. 46; unto whom all the world is not dross and dung, Philip. iii. 8, in respect of the glorious gospel of Christ Jesus. How shall they escape 'which neglect so great salvation?' Heb. ii. 3.

Oh, say some, this concerns not me, I thank God there is mercy in Christ, and I hope for pardon, &c. Beloved, here is the bane of men's souls, they will be their own carvers, and take of the gospel what they list. Oh, so much of Christ as concerns their own good they will have; so much as concerns their pleasure and profit; so much as they may have, and be proud too, and be devilish and evil in their life and conversation too. This they allow of. And it is pity he should live *that regards not Christ* in justification. But so much as concerns mortification and self-denial, as crosses them in their sinful courses, this they are strangers to. But, we must know, the gospel doth not only bring salvation, but it teacheth a man 'to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,' Titus ii. 12; to put off himself, his whole self, that he might have no judgment, nor no affection contrary to God.

To make this more plainly appear, take these few instances.

Instance 1. The very first lesson which the gospel enjoineeth, is to 'cut off our right hand, and pull out our right eye,' that is, to deny ourselves in those sins which are most useful and gainful to us. Now when this is pressed in particular, to some that live in their secret beloved sins, presently they begin to hate this blessed truth, and the ministry thereof. They know so much as will damn them, but so much, as without the which they cannot be saved, that they oppose. Contenting themselves with a bare form and outside of religion, they come to church, and take their books, and read, and hear, and receive the sacrament, &c., and in these outward performances they rest. Alas, beloved, what are these? I tell you, all the privileges of the gospel do but aggravate thy damnation, if thou are not better by them; for as they are in themselves invaluable privileges, and even ravish the heart of a true child of God; so when they are not entertained to purpose, they make our sin the more heinous. Every man is willing to accept of Christ, but it must be upon their own terms; and what are those? So they may enjoy their worldly delights; so they may increase their estates by such unlawful means, and not be crossed. So long they are content that Christ and the gospel shall be theirs; but otherwise, if they cannot enjoy Christ upon their own terms, that is, if they cannot go to heaven and to hell too, they will rather regard their own profits and pleasures, than regard Christ. Oh, how do these poor wretches delude their own souls! Beloved, the embracing and obeying the gospel is a spiritual marriage betwixt Christ and the believer. Now, you know in marriage the will is given up to the husband; the wife is no more her own, but at his disposing. So when once we are truly united unto Christ, we take him for better for worse. We must suffer with him, yea, live and die with him, and esteem him above all; we must take Christ upon his own terms, or else he will not be had. If we love not 'him above father and mother (yea and life itself), we are not worthy of him,' Mat. x. 37; and therefore all that do not thus obey the

gospel are rebels, and shall have the reward of rebels if they repent not in time. Were it not a comely thing, think you, for a company of traitors that had this condition propounded to them, if you will come in and live as good subjects you shall have a pardon, for them to go on presumptuously in their rebellion still, and think to have favour when they please? Would not a sharp execution be the just desert of such persons?

Instance 2. Again, Christ propounds pardon and forgiveness of sins upon this condition, that we will come in and live as wives* and as obedient subjects to his blessed Spirit, and not in swearing, filthiness, and other abominable courses, of which the Scripture saith, 'such shall never inherit the kingdom of heaven,' 1 Cor. vi. 9; and yet notwithstanding, Satan hath so bewitched many poor wretches, that they think their case is good, and it shall go well with them, be their lives never so loose and opposite to the ways of God. They bless themselves when God doth not bless them, but rather curse them to their faces. The devil himself is likely to be saved as soon as such graceless persons as these, without repentance. No, no; if ever they expect a pardon, they must live as subjects; if they frame not themselves to be guided by Christ, and come under his government, to be ruled according to his will, they have nothing to do with mercy and salvation: 'those mine enemies, that will not have me rule over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me,' &c., Luke xix. 27. We mock Christ if we will not suffer him to rule us.

Obj. But I cannot obey the gospel of myself.

Ans. It is true we cannot, no more than we can obey the law; nay, it is harder to obey the gospel than to obey the law in a man's own strength; for there are the seeds of the law in our nature, but there are none of the gospel. That is merely† supernatural. The promises are above nature to apprehend them; therefore a supernatural strength is required to plant the excellent grace of faith in our hearts. But though we be as unable to believe and obey the gospel as the law, yet here is the difference; together with the unfolding of our miseries by the gospel, the Spirit of God goes along to sustain us. The law finds us dead, and gives us no strength, but leaves a man cursed still; the gospel likewise finds us dead, but it leaves us not so, and therefore it is called 'the ministry of the Spirit,' Gal. iii. 5. 'Received you the Spirit by the law, or by the gospel?' Gal. iii. 2. God's blessed Spirit goes together with the sweet message of salvation and eternal life, and this Spirit doth not only open our understandings; but incline and bend our wills and affections to embrace the truth that is offered. Seeing, therefore, the Spirit which accompanieth the gospel is mighty and powerful in operation, let none pretend impossibility. For though they find not the sweet blaze of the Spirit at the first or second hearing, yet let them still attend upon grace, 'waiting at wisdom's gate,' Prov. viii. 34, and the angel will come at length and stir the waters. God will make the means effectual first or last, to those that in truth of heart seek unto him; for the gospel is the chariot of the Spirit, and the golden conduit through which the Spirit runs, and is conveyed to us. Therefore if thou wouldst not disobey the gospel, withstand not the Spirit of God working by the same.

How the Spirit works with the gospel. Now the Spirit works with the gospel by degrees. 1. It bringeth some to be willing to hear the gospel, who yet presently neglect and disregard the same. 2. Others are more obedient for a time, 'as the stony ground,' Mat. xiii. 5, but because they

* That is, as 'submissive.' See page 390, line 7 from bottom.—G.

† That is, 'wholly.'—G.

opened not their hearts to the working of the Spirit only, but will be ruled partly by carnal wisdom, and partly by the Spirit, it leaves them at last altogether. 3. But some there are who give up themselves wholly to the government of Christ, to be ruled in all things by his blessed Spirit, highly esteeming the treasures of heaven, and comforts of a better life, above all the fading outward felicities which this world can afford; who would not gain any earthly thing, hurt their consciences, or once defile themselves with unfruitful works of darkness; fearing lest they should in anything dishonour Christ, or grieve his good Spirit; and to such only hath the gospel come in power.

Therefore, I beseech you, seriously consider of this truth. *If you would not disobey the gospel, disobey not the Spirit accompanying the same*; deal faithfully with your own souls. Which of you all hath not some time or other had his heart warmed with the sweet motions of God's Spirit? Oh, do not resist these holy stirrings within you; give way to the motions of the blessed Spirit of God; second them with holy resolutions to practise the same; let them sink deep into your hearts, root them there, and never give over the holy meditation of them, till you make them your own, till you come to see grace and the state of Christianity, to be the most amiable and excellent thing in the world, and sin and carnal courses to be the most accursed thing in the world, worse than any misery, than any beggary, torment, or disgrace whatsoever. Beloved, till we have our spirits wrought upon to this high esteem of good things, and to a base undervaluing of all things else, we shall rebel against Christ first or last; for until such time as the heart of man is overpowered with grace, he cannot but disobey the gospel, either by shutting it out altogether, or by making an evil use of what he knoweth, thereby turning the 'grace of God into wantonness,' Jude 4, or else by revolting from the truth received altogether. When times of temptation come, unsound Christians will do one of these three, either despise, refuse, or revolt from the truth. Therefore I beseech you, let your hearts be cast into the mould and fashion of the gospel of Christ, let it be soundly bottomed and engrafted in you, that so you may grow more and more obedient to the truth revealed, and so your end shall not be theirs here, *which obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ*.

Quest. But how may I come to obey the gospel?

Ans. *Beg earnestly of God, in the use of the means* (else prayer is but a tempting of God), *that thy soul may be convinced what evil is in thee, and what evil is towards thee, unless thou repent.* Labour for sound conviction; for you shall not need to stir up a man that is condemned to seek out for a pardon, or a man that feels the smart of his wound to get balm to cure it. Oh, no; when our hearts are once truly humbled and pierced with a sight of our sins, then Christ will be Christ indeed unto us. Now mercy is sweet at such a time; anything for a Saviour then, and not before. Therefore labour every day to see more and more into the venomous and filthy nature of sin; make it as odious to thy soul as possibly thou canst; hearken to the voice of conscience; give it full scope to speak what it can, that so thou mayest fly to Christ. Consider how God plagueth us in this world for sin; how it fills us with fears and horrors, causing our consciences to torment us, and fly in our faces; consider what threatenings are denounced against sin and sinners, for the time to come; consider the fearful judgments of God upon others for sin, how it cast Adam out of paradise, the angels out of heaven, being so offensive to God, that it could no otherwise be expiated than by the death and bloodshedding of the Lord Jesus. I beseech you, let your

hearts dwell upon these things, and consider with yourselves how bitter you have found it to offend God, though now it be a time of mercy.

2. Secondly, consider how the gospel lays open Christ unto us; 'This is his commandment, that we believe in the Lord Jesus,' 1 John iii. 23. He that commands us to do no murder, not to steal, &c., commands us likewise to believe in Christ. He commands us to love our own souls so much, as to take the remedy which may cure them; so that now it is our duty to be good to our poor souls; and we offend God if we be not merciful to our own souls. Oh! what a favour is this, that God should lay a charge upon me not to reject my own mercy, as it is in Jonah, 'They who follow lying vanities forsake their own mercies,' Jonah ii. 8. If I do not love my own soul, and accept of mercy offered, 'I make God a liar,' 1 John v. 10, and offend his majesty.

3. Again, consider how God allures those that might except against mercy. Alas, I am laden with sin, will some poor soul say! Why! 'Come unto me, all you that are heavy laden, and I will ease you,' Mat. xi. 28. But I have offended God, I have broken my peace, &c., yet 'I beseech you, be reconciled to God,' 2 Cor. v. 20; though you have offended, yet there is hope. Do but consider how ready God is to help you, how continual his mercies are, and how he stretcheth out his hands to receive us.

4. Consider further, what a sweet regiment* it is to be under Christ, as a king, and as an husband. Will he not provide for his own family, for his own subjects? Beloved, it is not mere dominion that Christ stands upon; he aims at a fatherly and husband-like sovereignty, for the good of his children and spouse. It is their welfare he looks after. Therefore, I beseech you, be in love with the government of Jesus Christ, his blessed Spirit. Oh! it is a sweet regiment!* For the Spirit of God leads us quietly, enlightening our understandings upon judicious grounds what to do, by strength of reason; altering our natures, and bettering us every way, both in our inward and outward man. It never leaves teaching and guiding of us till it hath brought us to heaven and happiness.

To conclude, mark what the apostle saith here, 'What shall be the end of those that obey not the gospel?' He cares not what they know. Many say, we have heard the word, and we have received the sacrament, &c. It is no matter for that, how stands the bent of your souls? what hath your obedience been? This is that God looks after. Every man can talk of religion, but where is the practice? A little obedience is worth all the discourse and contemplation in the world; for that serves but to justify God's damning of us, if we live not answerably. Value not yourselves, therefore, by your outward profession, neither judge of your estate in grace, by the knowledge of good things. Nothing but the power of godliness, expressed in our lives, will yield real comfort in the day of trial.

Our obedience must be free. And we should labour that our obedience be 'free and cheerful,' Ps. cx. 3; always upon the wing, as we say, for that is evangelical obedience. God's people under the gospel are a voluntary, ready people, 'zealous of good works,' Tit. ii. 14. Oh! beloved, did we but consider what God hath done for us here, and what he means to do for us in another world, how would our hearts be enlarged in duty to his majesty! Did we but consider of his inestimable love in the Lord Christ, pardoning such wretches as we are, and not only so, but accepting our service and us to life everlasting; taking us from the lowest misery to the highest happiness; from the lowest hell to the highest heaven; of traitors

* That is, 'government.'—C.

to be sons; of slaves to be heirs of the kingdom, &c. Oh! did we but seriously consider and believe these things, how would they warm our hearts, and make us pliable and constant to every good work and way!

The apostle having tasted the sweet favour of God in Christ, might well use it as a motive to quicken others. 'I beseech you by the tender mercies of Christ,' &c., Rom. xii. 1. He knew this was a powerful argument, and if that wrought not upon men's hearts, nothing would.

Let our obedience, therefore, be cheerful; for now we are not in the oldness of the letter. We have not a legal covenant since Christ's coming, but we serve God 'in the newness of the Spirit,' Rom. vii. 6; that is, considering that the Spirit is given in more plenty since his ascension, we should be more spiritual and heavenly in our service of God. Considering that our Head is already entered into that high and holy place, and we, ere long, shall be present with him, having but a spot of time to pass here below, how ready and zealous should we be in obedience to God's will! and not suffer a heavy lumpishness and deadness of spirit to seize upon us in holy performances. But I hasten to the second amplification.