

SERMON VI.*

James 1. 22.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

THE limits of my time, since I intend to discourse to you only this hour upon this scripture, will not allow me to reflect much upon the context; which is all suitable, and of the same piece with the words of the text itself. We have at the eighteenth verse a very high eulogy given us of the word of God, as that which is the divine seed and principle of the new birth; and out of which God's great and glorious work of the new creation doth result. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." Whereupon the exhortation, "Be swift to hear," (ver. 19.) is grounded; that is, be very covetous of all seasons to wait upon the dispensations of this word. And then, at least, we come to this caution here in the text; "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." Though hearing the word is the appointed means of this new creation; and is that, which

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by divine designation is able to save the soul of a man, by virtue of that efficacy which many times accompanies it from God; yet this is not to be understood, as if it should do any such work upon them, who only give it the hearing, and no more. And therefore the apostle thinks it seasonable, and necessary to give this intimation by the way, upon what terms we might expect so glorious an effect to be wrought by it: that is, supposing that we apply ourselves to attend upon it, with that earnest intention of the mind, as those who have a design to comply with; and to guide and govern their practice by the word they hear; otherwise all will come to nothing. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own-selves."

We might recommend to you several propositions of divine truth from this scripture; but we shall choose to collect, and gather up all as much as we can into one, for the sake of greater dispatch, which you may take thus.

That it is a miserable self-deception for any to be hearers of the word only, and not doers of it. And herein we shall speak to these three things, as previous to the improvement of it.

I. Shew what it is to be a doer of the word.

II. What to be a hearer only. And

III. Wherein those, of the latter sort, do so miserably deceive themselves.

I. We are to shew what it is to be a doer of the word. The expression plainly imports a habit; according as we denominate every person that is of such or such a calling or trade, from the course and way of life which he follows. A doer of the word, (*ποιηται*), is not one that doth some single act, now and then, which the word enjoins or directs; but one whose wonted course, and the business of whose life it is to obey the dictates of this word, and who governs his life and the tenour of his actions by it. Just as we find the phrase of a worker of iniquity is, in the Old and New Testament, made use of to represent and hold forth to us the course of those persons, who trade in sin. They are said to be sin-makers, as the expression *κακοποιητες* doth emphatically note: their business is to work sin; and they do often exert their strength, and power that way. So we are to understand in general, a doer of the word of God; that is, one whose business of his life it is to do it in a continual course. And this supposes, and includes in it many things, which I shall briefly hint to you.

1. It doth suppose a design, a formed fixed design, that this shall be my course. Accordingly we have the Psalmist speak-

ing to this purpose; "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments: I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end." Ps. 119. 106. 112. As if he had said, "I purpose and intend so to do; and this is an intention I resolve to pursue, throughout my whole course, from which nothing shall divert me." So in like manner when we attend upon the dispensation of the word, it should be with a settled design in our hearts, and a sincere purpose to learn somewhat in order to practice; to apply and accommodate to practice the truths we hear, and that are capable of being applied to this purpose.

2. It carries with it a very serious applying of our minds to understand what is the mind and will of God, which is held forth to us in his word: that we content not ourselves to have heard such and such things propounded to us; but that we distinctly apprehend the scope and drift of what we hear, and what is the great thing aimed at in it. For we can never be doers of the word and will of God blindly, and in the dark. It is necessary that we understand and know it first. It is a way we are to walk in with open eyes. A good understanding (says the Psalmist) have all they, that do his commandments. Ps. 111. 10. He supposes a good understanding as necessary to the doing the commandments of God. We cannot do them, without having a right understanding of them. These words do also imply (which seems to be the particular sense of them) that a good understanding will certainly incline a man to keep his commandments; and that the keeping his commandments will argue him to have a good understanding. And indeed he is the wise man that understands this to be his interest, and accordingly makes it his business to know, and practice the mind and will of God.

3. It implies the use of our judgment in hearing the word, in order to distinguish what is divine, and what is human. For God hath thought fit that it should be so dispensed in the world, by such hands and instruments as may too possibly admit somewhat that is human into the dispensation of it. It is so sometimes merely as to the manner of the dispensation. There is nothing of this treasure that is conveyed to us by such vessels, but it will, some way or other, taste of the vessel: and that which we are principally to attend and mind, is to close with that which is most substantial, as supposing it to be altogether divine. It is also true sometimes that there may be some error as to the matter, as well as the manner. And there our desire ought to be of the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby, even as new-born babes. 1 Pet. 2. 2. New-

born babes have a kind of discerning if the milk be pure, or if there be any thing ill tasted or unsavoury in it. And there is a certain kind of taste and relish, which belongs to the new creature. "Cannot my taste (says Job) discern perverse things?" Job 6. 30. And this was the great commendation of the Bereans, That they searched the Scriptures in order to know, whether the things spoken to them by the apostles, were of God or no. Acts 17. 11. And it was noted to be a piece of generosity in them. They were more noble than they of Thessalonica, upon this account. We are to make use of our judgment: as the apostle prays for the Philippians, that they might abound in judgment and all sense, spiritual sense; that so they might discern the things that differ, or approve those, which are more excellent. Phil. 1. 9, 10.

4. It requires a great deal of reverence to be used in hearing the word. So to hear it as that we may be doers, requires a very reverential attendance upon it; as considering, that this is a revelation that comes from heaven, some part of which is now to be held forth to us. It is a divine light, which, through such a medium, is to shine forth to us. And there is certainly altogether a fault in this respect, among a great many professors of religion; that the reverence is wanting, which is due to those sacred records that go under the name of God's word, and which he claims and appropriates to himself, as his word. I have wondered, I confess, to see how among scholars, and learned men, there should be so great a veneration for some or other notable pieces of antiquity, any aged volume, any old record; and how high a price and value have been put upon them. Now there is no such piece of antiquity as this in all the world that we know of. The holy Scriptures, at least a great part, are the most ancient writings in all the world. And it should challenge a mighty reverence and veneration, to have a word brought down, and transmitted to us, through so many successive ages. But to consider it as a divine word, a revelation come from heaven, doth much more claim our reverence. How strange a veneration did those Ephesians express for that image, which, they were made to believe, fell from heaven! All Ephesus, as it is expressed, is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter: (Acts 19. 35.) as if all the city were of a piece, all heart and soul upon that one thing, which they believed to be of heavenly descent. Now this word we are sure is a divine-breathed thing; for all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God. 2 Tim. 3. 16.

Then it is that the word is like to be done, when it is receiv-

ed with reverence, not as the word of man, but of God : when we in our own thoughts prefix that preface to every part of that truth, which he himself hath prefixed to many parts and portions of it ; namely, " Thus saith the Lord," who is the Lord of heaven and earth. It is his word, who made and sustains all things by the word of his power. When therefore we look upon this word as carrying the stamp of the majesty of God upon it, then it is like to command the heart ; but it will signify little, till this is done.

5. To be a doer of the word supposes that we believe it, or that our hearing of it be mingled with faith. It profits not where it is not so ; and signifies nothing, if there be not that mixture. The word of God, says the apostle, works effectually in them that believe. 1 Thess. 2. 13. But, as it is in another place, " The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Heb. 4. 2. And it is never likely that men should practice that word, which they regard no more, than the word of a child. If any one, whose truth you suspect, tell you this or that, it will signify little to determine your practice, or to guide and influence any design you have in hand. Now to receive this word with faith, is to rely upon the authority of the Speaker, or him from whom it originally comes. " This is the word of God. There is no more doubt to be made of it, than whether the things be, or exist which I see with my own eyes." For it is faith that supplies the room of sight, in reference to things that fall not under our eye. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Heb. 11. 1. " God hath said this ; and therefore it is as sure, as if my own eyes saw it all." The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believes ; but to them that believe not, it signifies nothing, it has no power with them. Again,

6. It requires love ; a great exercise of love that the heart may close with it. It is said of some, that they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. 2 Thess. 2. 10. They had pleasure in unrighteousness. They had so much love to wickedness, that they had none for truth. Therefore they were left under strong delusions to believe lies, that they might be damned. So you find things are connected there. The love that is required here, is such as works out in sincere desire of the milk of the word, that so we may grow thereby. 1 Pet. 2. 2. Also in delight ; for the soul hath a sweet and savoury relish in it. " O how love I thy law !" (Ps. 119. 97.) says David : which was the name of that revelation of the mind and will of God then extant ; and was sweeter to him, than

honey to his taste. Ps. 119. 103. Thy words (saith Jeremiah) were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy, and rejoicing of my heart. Jerem. 15. 16. The word of God is then like to be done, when there is so dear a love to it; and the soul so taketh complacency in it, and unites to it, that it becomes as it were consubstantiated with the soul itself. And again,

7. It requires subjection; an obediential subjection to it, and compliance of heart with it. Receive with meekness (as it is in this context) the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. James. 1. 21. There are many hearts of men so opposite to the word of God, that when they meet with that in, and from it, which is cross and adverse to their corrupt inclinations, their spirits swell, and storm and tumultuate; and they are ready to say with those in the prophet, The word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken to us, we will not hear. Jerem. 44. 16. You must then receive it with meekness; that is, so as to yield to it, how cross soever it may be to any present disposition of yours. The word has been so received by gracious hearts, when it hath spoken terrible things. When dreadful things were foretold by the prophet to Hezekiah, he said; "Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken." Isai. 39. 8. Again,

8. It requires a previous transformation of the heart by it, so as that the proper stamp and impress of it be upon the soul. For the word can never be done by the hearer, but from a vital principle; of which it is itself to be the productive means. So it is said to be in the eighteenth verse of this chapter, in which is my text; "of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." If the new creature be not wrought by it in the soul, there will never be that doing of the word, which is expected and required. There must be an exemplar copied out from the word upon our hearts; and then we are to practice, and do according to that exemplar: still comparing it with the first idea, to be seen in the rule, or word itself. You obeyed (says the apostle) from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Rom. 6. 17. Or, as the words are capable of being read, into which ye were delivered. That is, you were cast into the very mould of the word; and have received the stamp and impress of it upon your souls, and so have obeyed it from the heart. Our Lord Jesus Christ in his kingdom (in that part of it which is more appropriate and peculiar) rules over a willing people and is not a king of slaves. He is obeyed with an inward inclination and propensity of

heart. His power hath made his subjects willing; that is, by writing his law in their hearts, which is the great promise of the evangelical covenant. When souls are made the epistle of Christ, having his mind transcribed, and written out upon their hearts; then it is they obey, and do the word, and never till then. And then it requires also,

9. A faithful remembrance of it; that is, of its rules accommodable to particular occasions as they occur. The apostle subjoins here in the words following my text a representation of the man that hears, without a design of doing the word; who says he, is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. Jam. 1. 23. 24. If we apply the apostle's similitude fully unto the purpose for which he brings it, it must not only have reference to such an idea, as we have exhibited to us in the word; or the representation of what we now actually are, but also of what we should be, both together. Looking into the word as into a glass we have a representation made to us there, of the new creature in all the lively lineaments of it; and so we see what we should be: and comparing ourselves therewith, we see what we are; and wherein there is a deflexion, and disagreement from our pattern. They that do only throw a transient eye upon the glass, go away and forget what they see; the image vanisheth presently out of their thought. Therefore there must be a perpetual image kept up before our eyes, by a faithful and continual remembrance of what the word of God representeth to us; to wit, of the true complexion of a christian, and wherein our own disagreeeth; that so upon all occasions we may be able to correct thereby what is amiss; and to direct our way and course according thereunto. And then there must be in the

Last place, an actual application of all such rules in the word, to present cases, as they occur. Thy word I have kept in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Psal. 119. 11. It is laid up in that repository and treasury for this purpose, to be used as there is need and occasion. Therefore so skilful ought we to be in the word of righteousness, which hath enough in it to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished for every good work; that upon all occasions, and whatever work we go about, we may have our rule still in readiness to apply, and actually may apply it to our case; so as neither on the one hand to walk dubiously, nor carelessly on the other. For those are extremes to be avoided. A continual scrupulosity is provided against by a continual acquaintance with the word,

and having rules always in readiness to measure particular cases by as they occur; and, on the other hand, carelessness is inexcusable. For many walk without having any regard to their own spirits, and matter it not whether they are right or wrong. To have this word, as the measure of our lives, to apply to upon occasion, is necessary in order to avoid these exorbitances; the one whereof is so very uncomfortable, and the other so very dangerous, and destructive. But then we are,

II. To speak to the other thing a little; namely, what is it to be a hearer only? By being a hearer only, we must not understand every thing to be excluded, besides the bare external act of hearing; as if no more were intended by it, than the outward act common to man with the brute creatures: for, undoubtedly, there may be included in it many acts of the understanding, and of the outward man. So to be a hearer only, is in the general to hear without any design of doing at all. For when it is required that we should be doers, the meaning of it is, not that we must be doers of all that is bidden and directed by the word, just while we are hearing. Therefore that which is required over and besides hearing, is a design to be doing the word; while to be hearers only, is to hear without any previous design of acting according to what they do hear. Some other motives and considerations there are, which bring persons to hear; but as for the business of practice they intend it not. It never came into their minds to look upon that as the true and proper end of hearing that they should do and practice what they hear.

Now truth is but one, error is manifold. If there be but one right end, that end is to be aimed at, which is practice. And that we may be capable of this, but one entire frame and right disposition of soul is required. But various are the ends, and many are the ill principles and dispositions, which may have place in the spirit of a man in reference to this matter. It is, therefore, a manifold character, which I might give, if the time would allow, of the hearer only. For as there is a manifold end; and many indispositions, in the spirit of a man, to the true end: so manifold are the characters of such as are hearers only. Therefore we are not to suppose, that they all belong to one and the same person; but some to one, and some to another. There is,

1. The inattentive hearer; that taketh very little heed to what he heareth. We ought (says the apostle to the Hebrews) to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. Heb. 2. 1. And set your hearts (says Moses) unto all the words which I

testify among you this day. Deut. 32. 46. He that never intends to be a doer of what he hears, will very probably little regard what he hears.

2. There is the inconsiderate hearer; that never ponders what he hears, nor compares one thing with another. I can but name particulars to you, which might well be enlarged upon. There is again,

3. The injudicious hearer; that never makes any judgment upon what he hears, whether it be true or false. All things come alike to him, he matters them not. Consideration is in order to judgment, and judgment follows upon it. We deliberate first, and then judge upon that deliberation. The inconsiderate hearer, therefore, will be an injudicious one. There is also,

4. The unapprehensive hearer: who hears all his days, but is never the wiser. Ever learning, but never comes to the knowledge of the truth. No light comes in to him, and he remains as ignorant after twenty years living under the gospel, as he was at the first.

5. The stupid, unaffected hearer; that is as a rock and a stone under the word. Nothing ever enters or gets within the stony ground. Things are heard sometimes that even rend hearts all to pieces, if rightly disposed; things full of terror, amazement, astonishment, and of dread; but they are heard by these without any trembling. Rocks and mountains may shake and shiver sooner than they. Again,

6. There are your prejudiced, disaffected hearers; who hear with dislike, especially those things which relate to practice: and with the greater dislike it may be, by how much the more what they hear, relates to the proper end of hearing. They cannot endure such things as aim at the heart, and concern the business and work of religion. And there are again,

7. Your fantastical, voluptuous hearers; that hear only to please their fancy or imaginations. So they come on purpose to try if they can hear a pretty sentence, any fine jingle, some flashes of wit. For it may be they have found some, who have to do with this sacred word, that will allow themselves to be so vain, as to gratify them in such things, when they come with such an expectation. Of which temper I remember an ancient saying, *Dissoluti est pectoris in rebus seriis quaerere voluptatem: it is a dismal token upon a person to seek for the gratification of his fancy in serious matters.* As if one would bring music to another, that lay under the torture of a broken leg; how very incongruous would this be! And such we are to consider is the state of souls, all shattered, broken,

diseased, and maimed. This is the common case of those we have to do with.* There are again,

8. Your notional hearers; that are of somewhat a higher form and sect than the others: who do not aim merely to have their fancies and imaginations gratified by something light and flashy but their understandings also. But it must be by some fine notion, which they have not met with before. And so they always come to learn some kind of novelty; and if they cannot meet with some new thing, which they have not met with before, they go away with a great deal of dislike, and distaste, at those they hear. With these, (and they are for the most part of the same sort, and therefore we may join them together) you may put,

9. Those talkative persons; who only come to hear that they may furnish themselves with notions for the sake of discourse: or that, when they come into company, they may have something just to talk of afterwards. Upon which a heathen moralist reflects with a great deal of ingenuity. "That is (saith he) when they hear such moral precepts as the philosophers use to deliver, and press in the schools; as all came into them in words, so, with them, all go out in words. Which is just the same thing, as if the sheep, when they have been grazing all day, should come at night to the shepherd; and cast up the grass they swallowed, to shew how much they had eaten. Grass it came in, and grass it goes out again. The shepherd does not expect this, but expects that of the grass they had eaten that day, there should come milk and wool from the concoction, and digestion of what they had eaten." It is much that we have need to learn such documents as these from a

* The word here *ακροαται*, *hearers only*, may remind one (says the author) of an ancient word that is of affinity with it, namely, *ακροαματα*; of which this is the sense. It was the name of certain songs and sonnets, joined with vocal and instrumental music, which were wont to be used in the conclusion of stage-plays, wherewith the hearers were entertained at their going out of the theatres. They were also very frequently used in the close of banquets. Why! the word of God is looked upon as such an *ακροαμα*, and the things contained in it as *ακροαματα*, so these [*ακροαται*] kind of hearers. "Thou art," (says the Almighty to the prophet Ezekiel) "unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words but do them not." Ezek. 33. 32. Such hearers there are who come only to have their imaginations and fancies gratified with somewhat, that may be delicious to them; and that is all that they aim at. These sure are hearers only!

heathen. What! because all we hear comes to us in words, should it all come out in words again? No, the end is surely that it should be so digested, and concocted, as to yield work and fruit, agreeable to what we hear. And then there are again,

10. The censorious and critical hearers; who come on purpose not as doers of the law, but as judges. They come to see what they may carp at, and so to pass their verdict. "Were such and such things rightly methodized? such and such words well placed? was there an exact concinnity in what was said?" and the like. This now is all the design they have in hearing the word. And then there is another sort too, and we have some experience, I am afraid, of too many such, in the age and day wherein we now live, and that is,

Lastly, Malicious hearers; that come on purpose to seek an advantage against those, they come to hear, particularly from what they preach. By this sort, you know, our Saviour was often pestered: who came to hear him; and to put questions to him; and so gave him occasion to speak, only to entrap and insnare him. To which may be added your raging exasperated hearers, such as Stephen's were at his last sermon; who gnashed upon him with their teeth, and could not forbear violence to his precious life, upon their hearing him. Thus you see the characters of those that are hearers only, which are various and manifold. I shall only touch upon the

III. Thing, namely, to speak to the self-deception of such persons. And here I shall shew, wherein such are deceived; and the grossness of the deception itself.

1. Wherein such are deceived. And they are certainly so, (1.) In their work. For they commonly think they have done well; and they find no fault with themselves, that they have been hearers only. And then

(2.) As to their reward they are also deceived. They get nothing by it all this time. That, and their labour are lost. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed" Jam. 1. 25. But they never go away with a blessing; most certainly they miss of it, who are hearers only.

2. For the grossness of this deception, it will appear to be very great, if we consider,

(1.) That they are deceived in so plain a case. For it is the plainest thing in the world, that the gospel is sent in order to practice. Now how strange is it, that men should be deceived in a thing so plain! What can the gospel be sent

for but only in order to practice? What other aim, or end, can it possibly have? As might be shewn in many particulars, if time gave leave. And,

(2.) It is self-deception; for they are said to deceive themselves; which is a far other thing, than when the matter is wont to be expressed passively only, and in softer terms. As to say to a person, "Sir, you are mistaken; you are deceived and imposed upon." This, I say, is much gentler, than to say of a man, that he deceiveth and imposeth upon himself. For this carries in it an intimation, that men do use some industry in the matter; that they industriously deceive themselves, as indeed it must be so in this case. For if men did not use some art or contrivance, they could never have hid these things from their own eyes; particularly, that this word is sent to be the guide of men's practice. And to overlook such a thing as this all their days, (as those men must be supposed to do who are hearers only) is miserable deception. It is their trade, and a poor trade the Lord knows! And they must be supposed to have used a great deal of artifice with themselves, to veil so plain a case as this from their own eyes and view; so as not to understand, that the gospel is sent to be their rule of practice, in order to their attainment of a happy state at last.

And now, to shut up all with a little application we may learn hence,

1. That persons are apt to overlook the main of their duty, and take up with some lesser parts.

2. That in the very business of hearing the word, there is great danger of self-deception, if persons do not carefully watch against it. And again,

3. We may learn, that the whole business of the gospel hath a designed reference unto practice. Be not hearers only, but doers of the word. As if he had said, Do not satisfy yourselves with merely hearing the word of God, as if there was nothing in it conducing, or referable to practice, as generally the things contained in it manifestly have; for this alone is not sufficient to answer the end and design of the gospel. Again,

4. We may learn, that it is a duty of very great concernment to attend upon the word preached or to be a hearer of it; for the whole business of our practice is to be consequent thereupon. It is then of great consequence to be a hearer of the word; and as much as this duty is neglected by many, the whole stress lies upon it of the design and end, for which the gospel comes into the world. The gospel signifies nothing

unless it be belived, and this "faith cometh by hearing." Rom. 10. 17. There are many persons that humour and please themselves in talking against so much hearing, and so much preaching; and think it a vain, and needless thing. But that is certainly because they have little considered what hearing, and preaching are for. If it were only for the minister to teach, and the hearers to learn some new thing not known before, truly all necessary truth, by attentive diligent inquirers, might be learnt in a little while. But it is rather to urge and inculcate things, which were known before. Therefore when the apostle had said, that it is by the word of truth that we are begotten of God, to be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures, he presently adds, "Be swift to hear." Jam. 1. 18, 19. As if he had said, these things ought to be often urged, and inculcated upon you; that so the product thereof, to wit, the new creature may be sure in you. If this be not done at one time, it may at another; some time or other it may be effected. Therefore be swift to hear, your life lies upon it. But then,

5. And lastly, You see of what consequence it is to add doing, to the hearing the word. And for that I need to give no other encouragement than that of our Lord at the close of his sermon on the mount. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them; I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. But, (says he,) Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not; shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it." Matt. 7. 24—27. And I cannot upon consideration of this but apprehend, that, as the stability of many (I hope) hath been promoted by the much preaching, and hearing of our times; so there are many (I am afraid) near to a very dreadful fall, who have been hearers only of Christ's sayings, but never minded to be doers of them.

And I must needs think it strange, if we have not among us a general apprehension of the danger of losing our opportunities of hearing the word of God. We have these upon such terms, that we should, methinks, reckon ourselves always in danger. And if we have any cause for that apprehension, what in all the world can we imagine more provoking, and likely to infer such a doom and judgment upon us, as the penalty of the word of God, than to be hearers only, without any

design to be doers of it? Whereas if we did but set ourselves, with a more earnest design, to apply, and turn all that we hear, into fruit and practice; it may be this might prevent such a stroke as we are not without reason to dread, nor without grounds to fear. But if we should not prevent it, yet it would be a very comfortable thing however in a cloudy, dark and gloomy time, to be able to make such a reflection as this; "Blessed be God, while I had such seasons, I laboured to improve them as well as I could. I laboured to take all opportunities that I could, to hear with a design to do, to quicken and help me to move onward in Christian practice." It will, I say, be very comfortable to be able to make such a reflection in a time of gloominess and darkness which it is possible we may see, and how soon we know not. And if in such a season we should be able to make this reflection, it would be a happy provision for us against it. It would suppose us to have gotten some stock, some treasure within us, which we might draw forth. We should then have the word within us, which when we should lie down, rise up, or walk, might commune within us; and so we be capable of being preachers to ourselves.

In a word, if ever we should come to such a state of things, that we should never see the face, nor hear the voice of a minister of God's word, where our lot is cast; if we should wear out our days in a wilderness, a desert, or a cave; it would be comfortable to have this word a companion to us, and ingrafted into us, which is able to save our souls: it would be comfortable, I say, to have a stock of divine truth to live upon, when we should, as to the external dispensation of it, be in penury and want. Let these things, therefore, move us to a more earnest endeavour to be doers of the word, and not hearers only.
