

## SERMON UPON ACTS XVII. 30, 31.

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*And the times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent : because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.—ACTS xvii. 30, 31.*

THE words are the conclusion of Paul's speech to the men of Athens, wherein, having disproved their idolatry, he cometh to show them the right way of returning from their sin and misery to their duty and happiness.

In them we have—(1.) An exhortation, ver. 30 ; (2.) An argument and motive to enforce it, ver. 31.

1. The exhortation, which consists of two parts—(1.) A censure of the past times ; (2.) The duty of the present time. Wherein, (1st.) The duty itself, repentance ; (2d.) The universality of its obligation, He 'commandeth all men everywhere to repent ;' that is, all without difference of nations, the call being now general.

2. The argument or motive to enforce it. The argument is—(1.) propounded ; (2.) confirmed.

[1.] Propounded, 'Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.'

[2.] Confirmed, 'Whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.'

To possess you with the full scope of this scripture, let me explain all these clauses.

I. I begin with the exhortation, which consists of two parts—(1.) The censure of the past times ; (2.) The duty of the present time.

First, In the censure of the past times two things are said of them—(1.) That they were times of ignorance ; and (2.) That God winked at them, or overlooked them.

1. That they were times of ignorance, and that easily leadeth into error. But now the light of the gospel was brought to them, God did more peremptorily insist upon his right, and commanded them to repent, and to turn from dead idols to the living God ; for the practices of ignorance will not become a time of knowledge : 1 Peter i. 14,

‘As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.’ There was a time when we knew neither the terror, nor the sweetness of the Lord, but securely lived in sin; what we did then will misbecome us now. So Rom. xiii. 12, ‘The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.’ While they were heathens, they lived in ignorance of God and the way to true happiness, and in a profane godless course, and an utter carelessness and neglect of heavenly things. As in the night the wild and savage beasts go abroad foraging for their prey; but, as the psalmist telleth us, Ps. civ. 22, 23, ‘When the sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens, and man goeth forth to his work;’ so in this spiritual night of ignorance, sin reigneth, and brutish affections carry all before them, and a man is governed by sense and appetite, and not by reason and conscience; but when the day dawneth, the man should show himself, and reason should be in dominion again; and though before they neither minded God and their own souls, nor considered their danger, nor their remedy, yet now they should awake, and return and seek after God. Sins are more aggravated in times of more full gospel light; for when light is come into the world, and men ‘love darkness rather than light,’ John iii. 19, then to our error there is added stubbornness and obstinacy; and whatever connivance God used before, this will bring speedy ruin upon us.

2. The second thing which is said is that God winked at these times. There—(1.) We must open the meaning; (2.) The necessity and use of this reflection.

[1.] The meaning. Certainly it is not meant of God’s allowing of their idolatries; that would entrench upon his honour, and hinder their repentance for former sins, and resolution of taking a new course for the future. What is the meaning then? for some interpret the clause as speaking indulgence, others as intimating judgment, which though to appearance they seem contrary, yet both may stand together.

(1.) Some think it speaketh indulgence, as we translate it, ‘winked at,’ that is, looked not after them to punish or destroy them for their idolatries. Ignorance is sometimes made an excuse *a tanto*, though not *a toto*; as Acts iii. 17, ‘I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers;’ and 1 Tim. i. 13, ‘I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly.’ It somewhat mollified the sin.

(2.) Others think this clause speaketh a judgment. The vulgar readeth *neglexit*, God neglected those times, or regarded them not. As the Greeks complained, Acts vi. 1, ‘That their widows were neglected,’ *παρεθεωροῦντο*, overseen; so here, *ὑπεριδῶν*, overlooked, or not regarded. So God is said elsewhere to deal with an apostate and sinning people: Heb. viii. 9, ‘They continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not;’ I took no notice of them to do them good. So God regarded not those times of ignorance, gave them not such helps and means as afterwards, or as now he did when he sent the gospel to them. To this sense I incline, partly because it is so explained in a parallel place: Acts xiv. 16, 17, ‘Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways; nevertheless he left not himself without a

witness.' And partly because it agreeth with the thing itself: Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20, 'He hath showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel; he hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them.' The grace of external vocation is a great mercy, and the apostle would have them apprehensive of it; for when God sendeth the light of the gospel, he showeth the care that he hath of the lost nations: Eph. iii. 5, 'Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.' Partly because God did punish the ignorance and error of the gentiles by giving them up to vile affections: Rom. i. 24, 'Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness.' It is a severe judgment to be given up to our own lusts, and blindness and hardness of heart. But yet I do not exclude the former sense, because though the idolatry of the nations continued for many years, yet God continued many signal temporal mercies to them.

[2.] The necessity and use of this reflection.

(1.) It is an answer to their cavil, ver. 18, 'He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods.' Now the apostle replieth that the gods of their fathers were idols, and not gods. But how can it stand with the providence of the true God to permit it and forsake mankind so long? Those times of ignorance God overlooked, sent them no means nor messengers then, but now he doth; and so he teacheth them and us that it is not sufficient to follow the religion of our forefathers, unless they had followed the will of God. If God overlooked them, and vouchsafeth you more grace, you must not be prejudiced by the tradition, but improve the present advantage.

(2.) He, as much as in him lieth, taketh off the prejudice of the practice of former times by a prudent and soft censure. As also elsewhere: 1 Cor. ii. 8, 'Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.'

(3.) He insinuateth that ignorance doth not wholly excuse those that err, but rather commendeth the Lord's patience.

*Secondly,* The duty of the present time.

1. The duty pressed is repentance. The word is *μετανοεῖν*. Repentance is a returning to our wits again. We were sometimes *ἀνόητοι*, 'foolish,' Titus iii. 3. When the conversion of the nations is spoken of, it is said, Ps. xxii. 27, 'All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord;' as if they were asleep, distracted, or out of their wits before the light of Christ's gospel shined into their hearts, not making use of common reason. We never act wisely nor with a condescency to our reasonable nature, till we return to the love and obedience of God.

2. This is here represented not as an indifferent and arbitrary thing, but as expressly and absolutely commanded. God's authority is absolute; if he hath commanded anything, contradiction must be silent, hesitation satisfied, all cavils laid aside, and we must address ourselves to the work speedily and seriously, without delaying, or disputing, or murmuring. God doth not advise or entreat only, but commandeth, or interposeth his authority. Now to break a known command, especially

of such weight and moment, is very dangerous: Luke xii. 47, 'That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes;' James iv. 17, 'To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.' A man in the dark may easily err and go astray; but while we know better, and what is the express will of God concerning us, we must set ourselves to do it.

3. As universally required, 'All men everywhere;' not only Jews, but gentiles; and not some sort of gentiles, but all; you, Athenians, and all the world; this universally bindeth. Some must turn from their idols, but all from their sinful ways, Whosoever will not repent when God calleth for repentance, they smart the more for it. Impenitency under the means is the worst sort of impenitency. I may say as Christ, Luke xiii. 5, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.'

II. The argument or motive. Which we consider—(1.) As propounded; (2.) As confirmed.

*First*, As propounded. Where note—(1.) The time, 'He hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world;' (2.) The manner, 'In righteousness;' (3.) The person, 'By that man whom he hath ordained.' These circumstances must be opened, and then we must consider how they make an argument.

For opening the circumstances.

1. The time appointed, but not revealed, 'He hath appointed a day.' The word *day* is not taken strictly for such a space of time as is usually signified by that notion, but it is put for a certain fixed space of time. The work cannot well be dispatched in twenty-four hours. There is *judicium discussionis*, and *judicium retributionis*, a judgment of search or trial, and a judgment of retribution. Though by the absolute power of God they may be commanded into their everlasting estate in an instant, yet the causes of the whole world cannot be discussed in an instant, especially when God designeth the full revelation of his justice in all his proceedings with men. Therefore, the apostle calleth that day, the day of 'the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,' Rom. ii. 5. When this time will be we cannot tell, for God hath not revealed it: Mat. xxiv. 36, 'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, but my Father only;' and therefore it is curiosity to inquire, and rashness to determine: Acts i. 7, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.' It is enough for us to believe the thing, which is not strange to reason, that God should call his creatures to an account. Natural conscience is terrified with the hearing of it: Acts xxiv. 25, 'As Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.' And the same guilty fears are incident to all mankind: Rom. i. 32, 'Knowing the judgment of God;' they know also that they who have done such things as they have done are worthy of death. That we are God's subjects is evident to reason, because we depend upon him for life, being, and all things. That we have failed in our subjection to God, in denying the obedience due to him, is evident by the universal, daily, and sad experience of the whole world; that error and sin will not take place to all eternity, but that there must be some time when the disorders of the world shall be rectified; is a

truth that easily maketh its own way into the consciences of men, but is fully determined by the gospel.

2. For the manner, 'He will judge the world in righteousness;' that is, then the whole world shall receive the fruit of their doings, whether they be good or evil. But doth God ever judge the world otherwise than in righteousness? I cannot say that, for 'far be it from the judge of all the earth not to do right,' Gen. xviii. 25. He never doth anything unjustly or unrighteously now, but then he will fully manifest his righteousness. He now judgeth the world in patience, but then in righteousness. There is a difference between a defect of justice and a transgression of the rules of justice. There is no injustice in God's dispensations of present providence, but yet there is a defect, or not a full measure or manifest demonstration of his justice showed now on the godly or the wicked. Therefore it is said, Eccles. viii. 14, 'There be just men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; and again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous.' He doth not pass this censure upon the wise and righteous providence of God, but either speaketh according to the judgment of flesh and blood, which is apt to judge hardly of so strange a distribution, or according to the visible appearance of things, when evil things happen to good men, or good things to evil men. For outward things being not absolutely good and evil, are dispensed promiscuously, and in the day of trial God hath his end in these things, for humbling and exercising the good, and hardening the wicked: but in the day of recompense, then it shall be only ill with them that do evil, and well with them that do good, and the retributions of his justice shall be fully evidenced.

3. The person, 'By that man whom he hath ordained;' meaning thereby Christ. But why doth he call Christ *man*, rather than God?

[1.] Partly with respect to the gentiles' incapacity to apprehend the mystery of the Trinity, or the incarnation of the Son of God; and it concerneth us to dispense truths as people are able to bear them; as Christ taught *καθὼς ἠδύναντο ἀκούειν*, 'As they were able to bear it,' Mark iv. 33. Therefore Paul would not offend them by doctrines which they could not yet understand.

You will say the resurrection was as offensive.

*Ans.* That was *ἐν πρώτοις* one of the first points of the apostolical catechism: Heb. vi. 1, 2, 'Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God; of the doctrine of baptism, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.' So that the apostle could not preach the very rudiments of christianity if he had not mentioned that.

[2.] Christ is to discharge this office in the visible appearance of man. As the judgment was to be visible, so the judge. The judgment is not to be acted by the Father or the Spirit, but by Christ in the human nature; therefore his coming is called 'an appearance;' Titus ii. 13, 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ;' and 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which

the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearance.' And when the judgment is spoken of, Christ is often designed by this expression, the Son of man: Mat. xxiv. 30, 'They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory;' and Mat. xvi. 27, 'For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.' He is the visible actor in the judgment, sitting on a visible throne, that he may be seen and heard of all, and the godhead doth most gloriously manifest itself by the perfections of his human nature.

3. This power is given to Christ as a recompense of his humiliation. For therefore hath 'God highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth,' Phil. ii. 9, 10, which is at the day of judgment: Rom. xiv. 10, 11, 'We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me.' Then all creatures in heaven, earth, and hell are to own the sovereign power and empire of the crucified Saviour. Some do it willingly, as the elect angels, and men; others do it by constraint, as the reprobate and evil angels, when they are forced to stand before the tribunal of Christ to receive their final doom and sentence. This is the last act of his kingly office, and the fruit and consequent of his humiliation. Therefore this Christ spake of when he stood before the tribunals of men: Mat. xxvi. 64, 'Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' The despised man, who was before them as a criminal in their repute, summoneth them to answer before his tribunal at that day, when his shame shall be turned into glory, and the scandal of his first estate shall be fully taken off, and those that despised him as man shall be forced to acknowledge him as God.

Secondly, The subsequent proof: 'Whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.' That is a sufficient testimony to convince the whole world. The resurrection is a certain proof and argument of the dignity both of Christ's person and office. It is an attestation to his person: Rom. i. 4, 'Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.' To his office and doctrine: John v. 27-29, 'And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done well, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.' How doth this make faith to all the world? for that is the word, *πίστιν παρασχών*. *Ans.* God hath not given faith to all men, but he hath given an argument to all men that is a ground of faith, from whence faith may evidently conclude that Christ is our judge, for he hath raised him from the dead. Where is the force of this demonstration? Others were raised from the dead, as Lazarus and the like, and yet they are not judges of the world. I answer—Christ died in the repute of men as a malefactor, but God justified him when he would not leave him under the power

of death, but raised him up and assumed him into glory, thereby visibly declaring unto the world that the judgment passed upon him was not right, but that he was indeed what he gave out himself to be, the Son of God and the judge of the world, to whom power is given over all flesh, to save or destroy them. If he live with the Father in glory and majesty, it will necessarily follow that he was not a seducer, but that holy and righteous one by whom God will execute his judgment.

*Secondly*, What influence this hath upon repentance.

1. The very day appointed inferreth a necessity of change both of heart and life; for how else shall we stand in the judgment who have broken God's laws, and are obnoxious to his wrath and displeasure? If we should never be called to an account for what we have been and done here in the world, we might then freely indulge ourselves in all fleshly delights, and do what we please. But this is a principle of fear and restraint, that for all these things God will bring thee into the judgment: Eccles. xi. 9, 'Rejoice, O young man in thy youth and let the heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.' None of us can hide or withdraw ourselves from that great tribunal, before which we are to give an account of what we have done and received in the body. And therefore it is best, while we are in the way, to make our peace with God and break off our sins by repentance; otherwise what quiet can we have in ourselves? or how can we keep ourselves when we are serious from trembling at wrath to come? We may smother conscience, and baffle all convictions for the present; but, christians, you and I must be judged. Now when God riseth up to the judgment, what shall we answer him? Job xxxi. 14, 'What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?' That must be thought on beforehand. If we have no answer which will satisfy now, much less then.

2. From the manner or strictness of that day's account, he will judge the world in righteousness: Eccles. xii. 14, 'God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.' Hypocrisy shall be disclosed, sincerity shall be rewarded, nothing shall be hidden from God's search; no person shall be exempted, no work, either open or secret, but God will bring it into judgment. His infinite wisdom knoweth all, and his infinite justice will give due recompense to all. The businesses of all nations and persons shall be openly examined. What then is our duty but to exercise ourselves both in faith and repentance, that our judge may be our saviour, and it may go well with us when this search is made?

3. Chiefly from the person, sufficiently attested by the miracles of his life and resurrection from death. God hath determined and ordained the person by whom the whole world shall be judged. And from thence we may judge of the rule; it is by his doctrine, and by our receiving or not receiving Christ. Surely it is our interest to be in with him who will cite us before his tribunal; to accept his person as our Lord and Saviour: John i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' To believe and entertain his doctrine as the message of God: John v. 24, 'He that

heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.' To imitate his example : 1 John iv. 17, 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment ; because as he is, so are we in this world.' To trust in his merit : Ps. ii. 12, 'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little : blessed are all they that put their trust in him.' To love him and live to him : 1 Cor. xvi. 22, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.' If he say, Come, ye blessed, or, Go, ye cursed, we must abide by it to all eternity. Woe to them that neglect his offers, contemn his ways, oppose his interest, oppress his servants. But blessed are they whose Redeemer is their judge ; he who shed his blood for them, must pass the sentence on them ; and one that is flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone is the final judge between us and God. Will he be harsh to his sincere disciples ? But to say all in a word, surely this consideration should do the work effectually, because his gospel and covenant is nothing else but a free promise of pardon upon condition of repentance : Luke xxiv. 47, 'That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.' And to this end the apostles were to preach that Christ is judge : Acts x. 42, 43, 'He hath commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins.' Nothing showeth the necessity of remission of sins so much as the judgment, and the necessity of repentance to remission so much as the judge, who in his covenant hath made this condition. Nothing doth befriend the great discovery of the gospel, which is free pardon of sin by Christ upon repentance, so much as the sound belief of this truth, that Christ is judge.

*Doct.* That the great purpose and drift of the gospel where it is sent and preached is to invite men to repentance.

This appeareth abundantly by the scripture, that repentance is one of the first and chief lessons which the gospel teacheth. When the gospel kingdom was to be erected or set up, John the Baptist crieth, 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' Mat. iii. 2. So when Jesus himself began to preach, his note is the same : Mat. iv. 17, 'He began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' His doctrine and the doctrine of the Baptist is all one in substance, and necessarily it must be so. The gospel findeth men under the tyranny of Satan, and offereth to bring them into the kingdom of God. So when he sent abroad his disciples first to the Jews, Mat. x. and afterwards to the world, Luke xxiv. 47, 'That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name.' The disciples were faithful to their commission : Acts ii. 38, 'Peter said unto them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.' But to give you some reasons of it, I shall—(1.) Inquire what is repentance, (2.) What the gospel doth to promote it ; (3.) How convenient and necessary this is for all those that are willing to come out of the apostasy of mankind, and to return to their obedience to God.



*First*, What is repentance? Sometimes it is taken largely for our whole conversion to God through the faith of Christ, as in the text: 'He commandeth all men to repent;' that is, to turn from their sins, and believe the gospel: 2 Tim. ii. 25, 'In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;' where the owning of the christian faith is called repentance. Sometimes strictly, as opposed to or rather distinguished from faith, as Acts xx. 21, 'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;' where repentance is said to be towards God as the end, as faith is conversant about Christ as the means. And there it signifieth a return to the love and obedience of our Creator, which was our primitive duty before the fall, as faith implieth all the duties that belong to our recovery by Christ. In short, in the strict sense, there is not only a sorrow for what is past, which is a beginning and help to the other part; for, 2 Cor. vii. 10, 'Godly sorrow working repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of;' but also a full purpose of heart to live unto God; Gal. ii. 19, 'I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. Sometimes repentance is described by one term, called 'Repentance from dead works,' Heb. vi. 1; where by dead works are meant sins, which render us liable to death; and often by the other, called a turning or returning to God: Zech. i. 3, 'Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord,' Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' From him we fell, to him we return; and so it includeth an acknowledgment of our sins, with grief of heart, and a resolution to forsake them, that we may live unto God; both of which, if they be hearty and sincere, will be evidenced by 'newness of life,' Rom. vi. 4, or doing works meet for repentance: Acts xxvi. 20, 'That they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.' The sum of what he preached was reduced to three heads, the two first by way of foundation, the third by way of superstructure. The two first imply an internal change, the third the outward discovery of it. By 'repentance' is meant there a bethinking ourselves, or considering our ways, after we have gone wrong, with a broken-hearted sense and acknowledgment of the misery into which we have plunged ourselves by sin; by 'turning to God,' our seeking happiness in God by Christ, and giving up ourselves to him to do his will; and by 'works meet for repentance,' a suitable and thankful life. All practical divinity may be reduced to these three heads, a sense of our misery by nature, a flying to God by Christ for a remedy, and the life of love and praise, which becometh Christ's reconciled and redeemed ones. This is repentance.

*Secondly*, What the gospel doth to promote it.

1. It requireth it indispensably of all grown persons. In the text, 'He commandeth all men everywhere to repent.' And our Lord, telleth us that the great end of his commission was to call sinners to repentance: Mat. ix. 13, 'I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' The gospel findeth us not innocent, but in a lapsed estate, under the power of sin, entangled in the love of the world, and the snares of the devil, and obnoxious to the wrath of God. Now Christ

came to recover us from the devil, the world, and the flesh, unto God, that we may love him again, and be happy in his love; so that they quite mistake the nature of our recovery who dream of a mere exemption from wrath, without an healing our natures, or restoring and putting poor creatures in joint again, which were disordered by the fall or that we can live in the love of God, before we are changed both in heart and life. No; Christ took another course to call us, not only to pardon and eternal glory, but to repentance; or strictly to enjoin this duty upon us, that by his grace we might recover a disposition of heart, which in some measure might incline and enable us to love, please, and obey God, and that under pain of his displeasure we might break off our sins, and live unto God; for he came not to give liberty to any to live in sin.

2. By its promises, for it offereth pardon and life to the penitent believer, and to them only. None can enjoy the privileges of the new covenant but those that are willing to return to the duty which they owe to the Creator. This is gospel: Luke xxiv. 47, 'That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name;' compared with Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' God and Christ are agreed that salvation should be dispensed upon these terms, and no other. We are not within the reach of the blessing and comfort of the promise till we repent.

3. By its ordinances, or the sacraments and seals of the covenant. As baptism, which serves for this use: Mat. iii. 11, 'I baptize you with water unto repentance;' and Acts ii. 38, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.' This is the initial ordinance, which is our first covenanting with God; and therein we bind ourselves to forsake all known sin, and to live unto God; and from that time forward we must reckon ourselves as under such a vow, bond, debt and obligation: Rom. vi. 11, 'Reckon yourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' What! doth our mortification or vivification depend on our esteem or conceit? Will that kill sin or quicken holiness? The meaning is, count yourselves obliged to die to sin and to persevere in holiness by your baptismal vow and covenant. In the Lord's supper, one great benefit offered and sealed to us is the remission of sins: Mat. xxvi. 28, 'For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins;' that is, supposing we make conscience of our baptismal vow, and renew our resolutions against sin, lest we grow cold and remiss in them.

*Thirdly,* How convenient and necessary this is for our recovery to God.

1. For the honour of God. Surely Christ communicateth the effects of his grace in a way becoming the wisdom of God as well as his justice. Now as the justice of God required that his wrath should be appeased, so his wisdom required that man should be converted and turned to God, because God, in dispensing pardon, will still preserve the honour of his law and government; as he doth it in the impetration, so in the application; as to the impetration that was not without satisfaction; so to the application, that is not without repentance, or a consent to live according to the will of God. Now this would fall

to the ground if we should be pardoned without submission, without confession of past sin, or resolution of future obedience; for till then we neither know our true misery, nor are we willing to come out of it; for they that securely continue in their sins, they despise both the curse of the law, and the grace of the gospel.

2. The duty of the creature is secured when we are so solemnly bound to future obedience. Our first hearty consent to live in the love and service of our Creator, with a detestation of our former ways, is made in a solemn covenant manner, called therefore the bond of the covenant: Ezek. xx. 37, 'I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.' So Num. xxx. 2, 'If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, and swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.' And besides, it is made in our anguish, when we drink of the bitter waters, and feel the smart of sin: Acts ix. 6, 'And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' And so the fittest time to induce an hatred of sin, and also love to God and holiness, as having then the sweetest and freshest sense of his love and mercy in providing a saviour for us, and offering pardon to us: Ps. cxxx. 4, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared.' Our thoughts are most conversant about these things: Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.'

3. It is most for the comfort of the creature. There are some principles planted in the heart of man for the restraint of sin, which may be baffled for a time, but our fears will return upon us; and till the soul be subject to God it can never be comfortable, nor at ease within itself; and it is in vain to think we shall find rest for our souls till sin be more hated and God more loved: Mat. xi. 28, 29, 'Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' The same reasons that enforce the necessity of a satisfaction to God's justice do also enforce the necessity of repentance, for else the heart of man is so constituted, that it will be a stranger to comfort. It is true God is not quick and severe upon every miscarriage, but yet the soul apprehendeth him an holy and just God, and therefore must be set to serve the 'living God,' or else the conscience is not 'purged from dead works,' Heb. ix. 12.

*Use.* Is to press us to mind this work of repentance. We put all upon faith, but overlook repentance; yet the gospel aimeth at this, and without it the grace thereof is not rightly applied. It is a duty of great use, for God's glory, man's obedience, duty, and comfort dependeth on it. And it is indispensably necessary, by God's authority, *necessitate præcepti*, and by the new covenant constitution, *necessitate mediæ*. And dare we be slight in it? The times of our ignorance show how necessary it is, and the light of the gospel doth more enforce it. Christ upbraided the cities where his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Mat. xi. 20-22, 'Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they

would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.' And there is a judgment will pass upon us: and if we repent not, who can stand in the judgment? Ps. cxxx. 3, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?'

What shall we do?

1. Expect not extraordinary dispensations. We have advantage enough by God's word: Luke xvi. 30, 'If one went to them from the dead they would repent.' There Christ impersonateth our natural thoughts, there is no need of that, conscience is awakened with the word. Christ is risen from the dead, and hath sent this message to us.

2. Rouse up yourselves: Ps. xxii. 47, 'All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord;' Ps. cxix. 59, 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.' Man is inconsiderate, and will not give conscience leave to work.

3. Observe God's checks. We are negligent, therefore God seeketh to awaken us: Prov. i. 23, 'Turn you at my reproof.' Smothering convictions breedeth atheism and hardness of heart.

4. Do what you can: Hosca v. 4, 'They will not frame their doings to return unto their God.' Then we are the more inexcusable in our impenitency when we will not so much as think and endeavour, or use the outward means which tend to repentance, or set about the work as well as we can. If we shut the door upon ourselves, who will pity us? God may do what he pleaseth, but we must do what he hath commanded, bend our course that way, for he has commanded us.

5. Ask it of God. Pray for it: Jer. xxxi. 19, 'Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.' Surely he is able to help you out of your difficulties: Mat. xix. 26, 'With God all things are possible.' He is willing, for he faileth not the serious soul: Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.'

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